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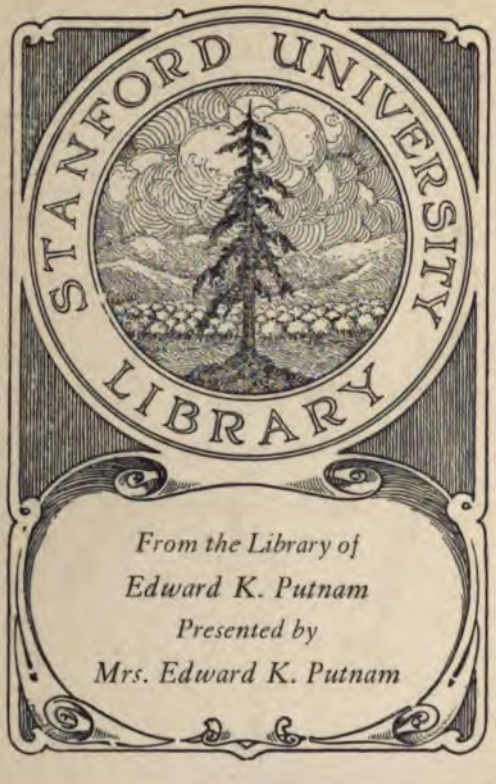
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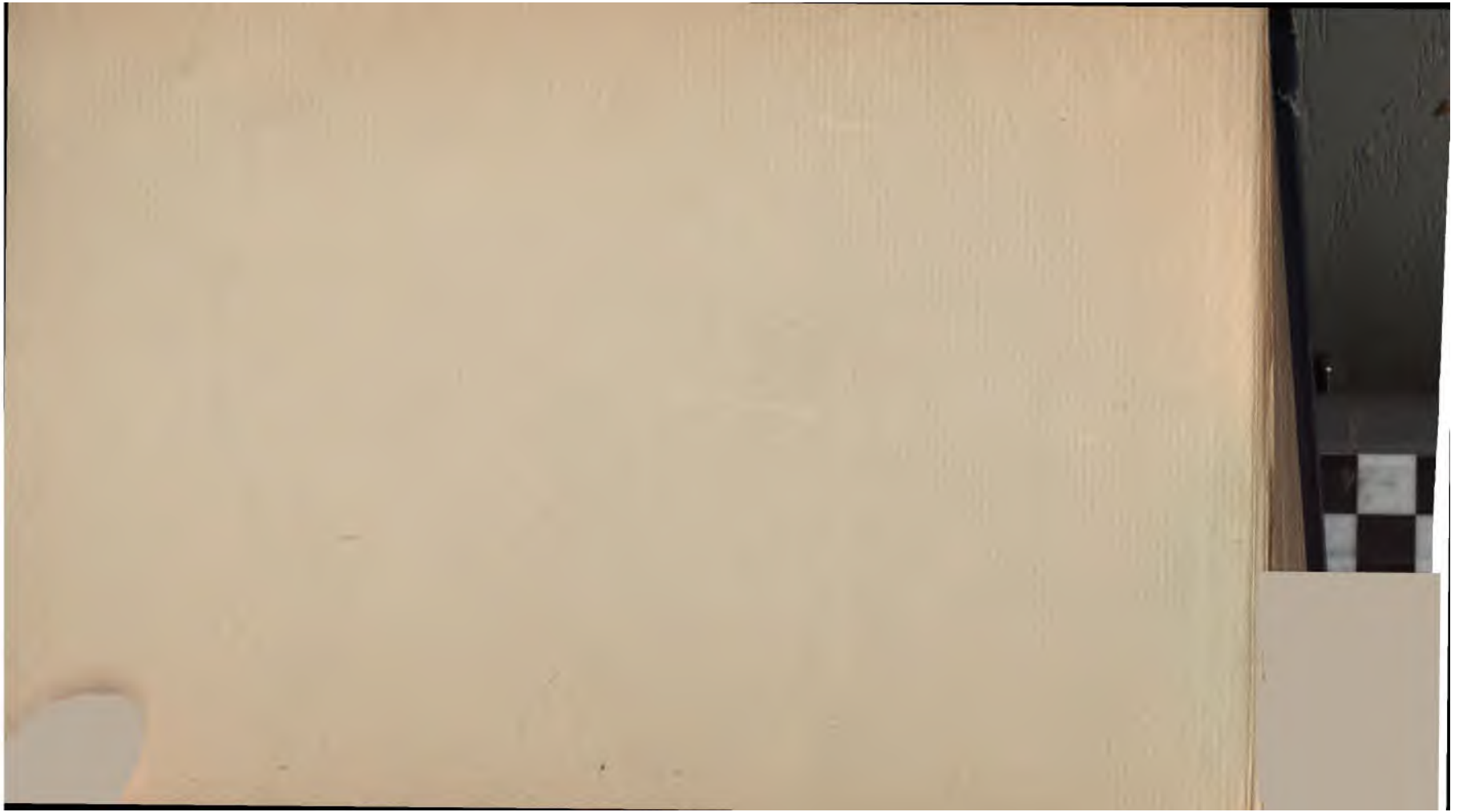

THE

COLLECTED WORKS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOLUME FIVE

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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

WILLIAM HAZLITT

EDITED BY A. R. WALLER
AND ARNOLD GLOVER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
W. E. HENLEY

Lectures on the English Poets
and on the
Dramatic Literature of the
Age of Elizabeth
Etc.

1902

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.
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LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS

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LECTURES ON

THE ENGLISH POETS

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY

ON POETRY IN GENERAL

The best general notion which I can give of poetry is, that it is the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice, or sounds, expressing it.

In treating of poetry, I shall speak first of the subject-matter of it, next of the forms of expression to which it gives birth, and afterwards of its connection with harmony of sound.

Poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. It relates to whatever gives immediate pleasure or pain to the human mind. It comes home to the bosoms and businesses of men; for nothing but what so comes home to them in the most general and intelligible shape, can be a subject for poetry. Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has a contempt for poetry, cannot have much respect for himself, or for any thing else. It is not a mere frivolous accomplishment, (as some persons have been led to imagine) the trifling amusement of a few idle readers or leisure hours—it has been the study and delight of mankind in all ages. Many people suppose that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables, with like endings: but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that 'spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun,'—*there* is poetry, in its birth. If history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper, and

are spread wider. History treats, for the most part, of the cumbrous and unwieldly masses of things, the empty cases in which the affairs of the world are packed, under the heads of intrigue or war, in different states, and from century to century: but there is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man, which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry. It is not a branch of authorship: it is 'the stuff of which our life is made.' The rest is 'mere oblivion,' a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life, is the poetry of it. Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry, hatred is poetry; contempt, jealousy, remorse, admiration, wonder, pity, despair, or madness, are all poetry. Poetry is that fine particle within us, that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being: without it 'man's life is poor as beast's.' Man is a poetical animal: and those of us who do not study the principles of poetry, act upon them all our lives, like Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who had always spoken prose without knowing it. The child is a poet in fact, when he first plays at hide-and-seek, or repeats the story of Jack the Giant-killer; the shepherd-boy is a poet, when he first crowns his mistress with a garland of flowers; the countryman, when he stops to look at the rainbow; the city-apprentice, when he gazes after the Lord-Mayor's show; the miser, when he hugs his gold; the courtier, who builds his hopes upon a smile; the savage, who paints his idol with blood; the slave, who worships a tyrant, or the tyrant, who fancies himself a god;—the vain, the ambitious, the proud, the choleric man, the hero and the coward, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all live in a world of their own making; and the poet does no more than describe what all the others think and act. If his art is folly and madness, it is folly and madness at second hand. 'There is warrant for it.' Poets alone have not 'such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cooler reason' can.

> 'The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;
> The madman. While the lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth to heav'n;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination.'

ON POETRY IN GENERAL

If poetry is a dream, the business of life is much the same. If it is a fiction, made up of what we wish things to be, and fancy that they are, because we wish them so, there is no other nor better reality. Ariosto has described the loves of Angelica and Medoro: but was not Medoro, who carved the name of his mistress on the barks of trees, as much enamoured of her charms as he? Homer has celebrated the anger of Achilles: but was not the hero as mad as the poet? Plato banished the poets from his Commonwealth, lest their descriptions of the natural man should spoil his mathematical man, who was to be without passions and affections, who was neither to laugh nor weep, to feel sorrow nor anger, to be cast down nor elated by any thing. This was a chimera, however, which never existed but in the brain of the inventor; and Homer's poetical world has outlived Plato's philosophical Republic.

Poetry then is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature. We shape things according to our wishes and fancies, without poetry; but poetry is the most emphatical language that can be found for those creations of the mind 'which ecstacy is very cunning in.' Neither a mere description of natural objects, nor a mere delineation of natural feelings, however distinct or forcible, constitutes the ultimate end and aim of poetry, without the heightenings of the imagination. The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a reflected light, that while it shews us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it: the flame of the passions, communicated to the imagination, reveals to us, as with a flash of lightning, the inmost recesses of thought, and penetrates our whole being. Poetry represents forms chiefly as they suggest other forms; feelings, as they suggest forms or other feelings. Poetry puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe. It describes the flowing, not the fixed. It does not define the limits of sense, or analyze the distinctions of the understanding, but signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling. The poetical impression of any object is that uneasy, exquisite sense of beauty or power that cannot be contained within itself; that is impatient of all limit; that (as flame bends to flame) strives to link itself to some other image of kindred beauty or grandeur; to enshrine itself, as it were, in the highest forms of fancy, and to relieve the aching sense of pleasure by expressing it in the boldest manner, and by the most striking examples of the same quality in other instances. Poetry, according to Lord Bacon, for this reason, 'has something divine in it, because it raises the mind and hurries it into sublimity, by conforming the shows of things to the desires of the soul, instead of subjecting the soul to external things,

as reason and history do.' It is strictly the language of the imagination; and the imagination is that faculty which represents objects, not as they are in themselves, but as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of power. This language is not the less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind. Let an object, for instance, be presented to the senses in a state of agitation or fear—and the imagination will distort or magnify the object, and convert it into the likeness of whatever is most proper to encourage the fear. 'Our eyes are made the fools' of our other faculties. This is the universal law of the imagination,

> 'That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy:
> Or in the night imagining some fear,
> How easy is each bush suppos'd a bear!'

When Iachimo says of Imogen,

> '——The flame o' th' taper
> Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids
> To see the enclosed lights'—

this passionate interpretation of the motion of the flame to accord with the speaker's own feelings, is true poetry. The lover, equally with the poet, speaks of the auburn tresses of his mistress as locks of shining gold, because the least tinge of yellow in the hair has, from novelty and a sense of personal beauty, a more lustrous effect to the imagination than the purest gold. We compare a man of gigantic stature to a tower: not that he is any thing like so large, but because the excess of his size beyond what we are accustomed to expect, or the usual size of things of the same class, produces by contrast a greater feeling of magnitude and ponderous strength than another object of ten times the same dimensions. The intensity of the feeling makes up for the disproportion of the objects. Things are equal to the imagination, which have the power of affecting the mind with an equal degree of terror, admiration, delight, or love. When Lear calls upon the heavens to avenge his cause, 'for they are old like him,' there is nothing extravagant or impious in this sublime identification of his age with theirs; for there is no other image which could do justice to the agonising sense of his wrongs and his despair!

Poetry is the high-wrought enthusiasm of fancy and feeling. As in describing natural objects, it impregnates sensible impressions with

the forms of fancy, so it describes the feelings of pleasure or pain, by blending them with the strongest movements of passion, and the most striking forms of nature. Tragic poetry, which is the most impassioned species of it, strives to carry on the feeling to the utmost point of sublimity or pathos, by all the force of comparison or contrast; loses the sense of present suffering in the imaginary exaggeration of it; exhausts the terror or pity by an unlimited indulgence of it; grapples with impossibilities in its desperate impatience of restraint; throws us back upon the past, forward into the future; brings every moment of our being or object of nature in startling review before us; and in the rapid whirl of events, lifts us from the depths of woe to the highest contemplations on human life. When Lear says of Edgar, 'Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this;' what a bewildered amazement, what a wrench of the imagination, that cannot be brought to conceive of any other cause of misery than that which has bowed it down, and absorbs all other sorrow in its own! His sorrow, like a flood, supplies the sources of all other sorrow. Again, when he exclaims in the mad scene, 'The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me!' it is passion lending occasion to imagination to make every creature in league against him, conjuring up ingratitude and insult in their least looked-for and most galling shapes, searching every thread and fibre of his heart, and finding out the last remaining image of respect or attachment in the bottom of his breast, only to torture and kill it! In like manner, the 'So I am' of Cordelia gushes from her heart like a torrent of tears, relieving it of a weight of love and of supposed ingratitude, which had pressed upon it for years. What a fine return of the passion upon itself is that in Othello—with what a mingled agony of regret and despair he clings to the last traces of departed happiness—when he exclaims,

> ——'Oh now, for ever
> Farewel the tranquil mind. Farewel content;
> Farewel the plumed troops and the big war,
> That make ambition virtue! Oh farewel!
> Farewel the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war:
> And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
> Th' immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
> Farewel! Othello's occupation's gone!'

How his passion lashes itself up and swells and rages like a tide in its

sounding course, when in answer to the doubts expressed of his returning love, he says,

> 'Never, Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont:
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
> Till that a capable and wide revenge
> Swallow them up.'—

The climax of his expostulation afterwards with Desdemona is at that line,

> 'But there where I had garner'd up my heart,
> To be discarded thence!'—

One mode in which the dramatic exhibition of passion excites our sympathy without raising our disgust is, that in proportion as it sharpens the edge of calamity and disappointment, it strengthens the desire of good. It enhances our consciousness of the blessing, by making us sensible of the magnitude of the loss. The storm of passion lays bare and shews us the rich depths of the human soul: the whole of our existence, the sum total of our passions and pursuits, of that which we desire and that which we dread, is brought before us by contrast; the action and re-action are equal; the keenness of immediate suffering only gives us a more intense aspiration after, and a more intimate participation with the antagonist world of good; makes us drink deeper of the cup of human life; tugs at the heart-strings; loosens the pressure about them; and calls the springs of thought and feeling into play with tenfold force.

Impassioned poetry is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as of the sensitive—of the desire to know, the will to act, and the power to feel; and ought to appeal to these different parts of our constitution, in order to be perfect. The domestic or prose tragedy, which is thought to be the most natural, is in this sense the least so, because it appeals almost exclusively to one of these faculties, our sensibility. The tragedies of Moore and Lillo, for this reason, however affecting at the time, oppress and lie like a dead weight upon the mind, a load of misery which it is unable to throw off: the tragedy of Shakspeare, which is true poetry, stirs our inmost affections; abstracts evil from itself by combining it with all the forms of imagination, and with the deepest workings of the heart, and rouses the whole man within us.

The pleasure, however, derived from tragic poetry, is not any thing peculiar to it as poetry, as a fictitious and fanciful thing. It is not an anomaly of the imagination. It has its source and ground-work in the common love of strong excitement. As Mr. Burke observes, people flock to see a tragedy; but if there were a public execution in the next street, the theatre would very soon be empty. It is not then the difference between fiction and reality that solves the difficulty. Children are satisfied with the stories of ghosts and witches in plain prose: nor do the hawkers of full, true, and particular accounts of murders and executions about the streets, find it necessary to have them turned into penny ballads, before they can dispose of these interesting and authentic documents. The grave politician drives a thriving trade of abuse and calumnies poured out against those whom he makes his enemies for no other end than that he may live by them. The popular preacher makes less frequent mention of heaven than of hell. Oaths and nicknames are only a more vulgar sort of poetry or rhetoric. We are as fond of indulging our violent passions as of reading a description of those of others. We are as prone to make a torment of our fears, as to luxuriate in our hopes of good. If it be asked, Why we do so? the best answer will be, Because we cannot help it. The sense of power is as strong a principle in the mind as the love of pleasure. Objects of terror and pity exercise the same despotic control over it as those of love or beauty. It is as natural to hate as to love, to despise as to admire, to express our hatred or contempt, as our love or admiration.

> 'Masterless passion sways us to the mood
> Of what it likes or loathes.'

Not that we like what we loathe; but we like to indulge our hatred and scorn of it; to dwell upon it, to exasperate our idea of it by every refinement of ingenuity and extravagance of illustration; to make it a bugbear to ourselves, to point it out to others in all the splendour of deformity, to embody it to the senses, to stigmatise it by name, to grapple with it in thought, in action, to sharpen our intellect, to arm our will against it, to know the worst we have to contend with, and to contend with it to the utmost. Poetry is only the highest eloquence of passion, the most vivid form of expression that can be given to our conception of any thing, whether pleasurable or painful, mean or dignified, delightful or distressing. It is the perfect coincidence of the image and the words with the feeling we have, and of which we cannot get rid in any other way, that gives an instant 'satisfaction to the thought.' This is equally the origin of wit and

and giants. At present we are less exposed to the vicissitudes of good or evil, to the incursions of wild beasts or 'bandit fierce,' or to the unmitigated fury of the elements. The time has been that 'our fell of hair would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir as life were in it.' But the police spoils all; and we now hardly so much as dream of a midnight murder. Macbeth is only tolerated in this country for the sake of the music; and in the United States of America, where the philosophical principles of government are carried still farther in theory and practice, we find that the Beggar's Opera is hooted from the stage. Society, by degrees, is constructed into a machine that carries us safely and insipidly from one end of life to the other, in a very comfortable prose style.

'Obscurity her curtain round them drew,
And siren Sloth a dull quietus sung.'

The remarks which have been here made, would, in some measure, lead to a solution of the question of the comparative merits of painting and poetry. I do not mean to give any preference, but it should seem that the argument which has been sometimes set up, that painting must affect the imagination more strongly, because it represents the image more distinctly, is not well founded. We may assume without much temerity, that poetry is more poetical than painting. When artists or connoisseurs talk on stilts about the poetry of painting, they shew that they know little about poetry, and have little love for the art. Painting gives the object itself; poetry what it implies. Painting embodies what a thing contains in itself: poetry suggests what exists out of it, in any manner connected with it. But this last is the proper province of the imagination. Again, as it relates to passion, painting gives the event, poetry the progress of events: but it is during the progress, in the interval of expectation and suspense, while our hopes and fears are strained to the highest pitch of breathless agony, that the pinch of the interest lies.

'Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.
The mortal instruments are then in council;
And the state of man, like to a little kingdom,
Suffers then the nature of an insurrection.'

But by the time that the picture is painted, all is over. Faces are the best part of a picture; but even faces are not what we chiefly remember in what interests us most.—But it may be asked then, Is

there anything better than Claude Lorraine's landscapes, than Titian's portraits, than Raphael's cartoons, or the Greek statues? Of the two first I shall say nothing, as they are evidently picturesque, rather than imaginative. Raphael's cartoons are certainly the finest comments that ever were made on the Scriptures. Would their effect be the same, if we were not acquainted with the text? But the New Testament existed before the cartoons. There is one subject of which there is no cartoon, Christ washing the feet of the disciples the night before his death. But that chapter does not need a commentary! It is for want of some such resting place for the imagination that the Greek statues are little else than specious forms. They are marble to the touch and to the heart. They have not an informing principle within them. In their faultless excellence they appear sufficient to themselves. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of passion or suffering. By their beauty they are deified. But they are not objects of religious faith to us, and their forms are a reproach to common humanity. They seem to have no sympathy with us, and not to want our admiration.

Poetry in its matter and form is natural imagery or feeling, combined with passion and fancy. In its mode of conveyance, it combines the ordinary use of language with musical expression. There is a question of long standing, in what the essence of poetry consists; or what it is that determines why one set of ideas should be expressed in prose, another in verse. Milton has told us his idea of poetry in a single line—

> 'Thoughts that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers.'

As there are certain sounds that excite certain movements, and the song and dance go together, so there are, no doubt, certain thoughts that lead to certain tones of voice, or modulations of sound, and change 'the words of Mercury into the songs of Apollo.' There is a striking instance of this adaptation of the movement of sound and rhythm to the subject, in Spenser's description of the Satyrs accompanying Una to the cave of Sylvanus.

> 'So from the ground she fearless doth arise
> And walketh forth without suspect of crime.
> They, all as glad as birds of joyous prime,
> Thence lead her forth, about her dancing round,
> Shouting and singing all a shepherd's rhyme;
> And with green branches strewing all the ground,
> Do worship her as queen with olive garland crown'd.

And all the way their merry pipes they sound,
That all the woods and doubled echoes ring;
And with their horned feet do wear the ground,
Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring;
So towards old Sylvanus they her bring,
Who with the noise awaked, cometh out.'

Faery Queen, b. i. c. vi.

On the contrary, there is nothing either musical or natural in the ordinary construction of language. It is a thing altogether arbitrary and conventional. Neither in the sounds themselves, which are the voluntary signs of certain ideas, nor in their grammatical arrangements in common speech, is there any principle of natural imitation, or correspondence to the individual ideas, or to the tone of feeling with which they are conveyed to others. The jerks, the breaks, the inequalities, and harshnesses of prose, are fatal to the flow of a poetical imagination, as a jolting road or a stumbling horse disturbs the reverie of an absent man. But poetry makes these odds all even. It is the music of language, answering to the music of the mind, untying as it were 'the secret soul of harmony.' Wherever any object takes such a hold of the mind as to make us dwell upon it, and brood over it, melting the heart in tenderness, or kindling it to a sentiment of enthusiasm;—wherever a movement of imagination or passion is impressed on the mind, by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion, to bring all other objects into accord with it, and to give the same movement of harmony, sustained and continuous, or gradually varied according to the occasion, to the sounds that express it—this is poetry. The musical in sound is the sustained and continuous; the musical in thought is the sustained and continuous also. There is a near connection between music and deep-rooted passion. Mad people sing. As often as articulation passes naturally into intonation, there poetry begins. Where one idea gives a tone and colour to others, where one feeling melts others into it, there can be no reason why the same principle should not be extended to the sounds by which the voice utters these emotions of the soul, and blends syllables and lines into each other. It is to supply the inherent defect of harmony in the customary mechanism of language, to make the sound an echo to the sense, when the sense becomes a sort of echo to itself—to mingle the tide of verse, 'the golden cadences of poetry,' with the tide of feeling, flowing and murmuring as it flows—in short, to take the language of the imagination from off the ground, and enable it to spread its wings where it may indulge its own impulses—

'Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air—'

without being stopped, or fretted, or diverted with the abruptnesses and petty obstacles, and discordant flats and sharps of prose, that poetry was invented. It is to common language, what springs are to a carriage, or wings to feet. In ordinary speech we arrive at a certain harmony by the modulations of the voice: in poetry the same thing is done systematically by a regular collocation of syllables. It has been well observed, that every one who declaims warmly, or grows intent upon a subject, rises into a sort of blank verse or measured prose. The merchant, as described in Chaucer, went on his way 'sounding always the increase of his winning.' Every prose-writer has more or less of rhythmical adaptation, except poets, who, when deprived of the regular mechanism of verse, seem to have no principle of modulation left in their writings.

An excuse might be made for rhyme in the same manner. It is but fair that the ear should linger on the sounds that delight it, or avail itself of the same brilliant coincidence and unexpected recurrence of syllables, that have been displayed in the invention and collocation of images. It is allowed that rhyme assists the memory; and a man of wit and shrewdness has been heard to say, that the only four good lines of poetry are the well-known ones which tell the number of days in the months of the year.

'Thirty days hath September,' &c.

But if the jingle of names assists the memory, may it not also quicken the fancy? and there are other things worth having at our fingers' ends, besides the contents of the almanac.—Pope's versification is tiresome, from its excessive sweetness and uniformity. Shakspeare's blank verse is the perfection of dramatic dialogue.

All is not poetry that passes for such: nor does verse make the whole difference between poetry and prose. The Iliad does not cease to be poetry in a literal translation; and Addison's Campaign has been very properly denominated a Gazette in rhyme. Common prose differs from poetry, as treating for the most part either of such trite, familiar, and irksome matters of fact, as convey no extraordinary impulse to the imagination, or else of such difficult and laborious processes of the understanding, as do not admit of the wayward or violent movements either of the imagination or the passions.

I will mention three works which come as near to poetry as possible without absolutely being so, namely, the Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, and the Tales of Boccaccio. Chaucer and Dryden have translated some of the last into English rhyme, but the essence and the power of poetry was there before. That which lifts the spirit above the earth, which draws the soul out of itself with

indescribable longings, is poetry in kind, and generally fit to become so in name, by being 'married to immortal verse.' If it is of the essence of poetry to strike and fix the imagination, whether we will or no, to make the eye of childhood glisten with the starting tear, to be never thought of afterwards with indifference, John Bunyan and Daniel Defoe may be permitted to pass for poets in their way. The mixture of fancy and reality in the Pilgrim's Progress was never equalled in any allegory. His pilgrims walk above the earth, and yet are on it. What zeal, what beauty, what truth of fiction! What deep feeling in the description of Christian's swimming across the water at last, and in the picture of the Shining Ones within the gates, with wings at their backs and garlands on their heads, who are to wipe all tears from his eyes! The writer's genius, though not 'dipped in dews of Castalie,' was baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The prints in this book are no small part of it. If the confinement of Philoctetes in the island of Lemnos was a subject for the most beautiful of all the Greek tragedies, what shall we say to Robinson Crusoe in his? Take the speech of the Greek hero on leaving his cave, beautiful as it is, and compare it with the reflections of the English adventurer in his solitary place of confinement. The thoughts of home, and of all from which he is for ever cut off, swell and press against his bosom, as the heaving ocean rolls its ceaseless tide against the rocky shore, and the very beatings of his heart become audible in the eternal silence that surrounds him. Thus he says,

'As I walked about, either in my hunting, or for viewing the country, the anguish of my soul at my condition would break out upon me on a sudden, and my very heart would die within me to think of the woods, the mountains, the deserts I was in; and how I was a prisoner, locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness, without redemption. In the midst of the greatest composures of my mind, this would break out upon me like a storm, and make me wring my hands, and weep like a child. Sometimes it would take me in the middle of my work, and I would immediately sit down and sigh, and look upon the ground for an hour or two together, and this was still worse to me, for if I could burst into tears or vent myself in words, it would go off, and the grief having exhausted itself would abate.' P. 50.

The story of his adventures would not make a poem like the Odyssey, it is true; but the relator had the true genius of a poet. It has been made a question whether Richardson's romances are poetry; and the answer perhaps is, that they are not poetry, because they are not romance. The interest is worked up to an inconceivable height; but it is by an infinite number of little things, by

incessant labour and calls upon the attention, by a repetition of blows that have no rebound in them. The sympathy excited is not a voluntary contribution, but a tax. Nothing is unforced and spontaneous. There is a want of elasticity and motion. The story does not 'give an echo to the seat where love is throned.' The heart does not answer of itself like a chord in music. The fancy does not run on before the writer with breathless expectation, but is dragged along with an infinite number of pins and wheels, like those with which the Lilliputians dragged Gulliver pinioned to the royal palace.—Sir Charles Grandison is a coxcomb. What sort of a figure would he cut, translated into an epic poem, by the side of Achilles? Clarissa, the divine Clarissa, is too interesting by half. She is interesting in her ruffles, in her gloves, her samplers, her aunts and uncles—she is interesting in all that is uninteresting. Such things, however intensely they may be brought home to us, are not conductors to the imagination. There is infinite truth and feeling in Richardson; but it is extracted from a *caput mortuum* of circumstances: it does not evaporate of itself. His poetical genius is like Ariel confined in a pine-tree, and requires an artificial process to let it out. Shakspeare says—

> 'Our poesy is as a gum
> Which issues whence 'tis nourished, our gentle flame
> Provokes itself, and like the current flies
> Each bound it chafes.'[1]

I shall conclude this general account with some remarks on four of the principal works of poetry in the world, at different periods of history—Homer, the Bible, Dante, and let me add, Ossian. In Homer, the principle of action or life is predominant; in the Bible, the principle of faith and the idea of Providence; Dante is a personification of blind will; and in Ossian we see the decay of life, and the lag end of the world. Homer's poetry is the heroic: it is full of life and action: it is bright as the day, strong as a river. In the vigour of his intellect, he grapples with all the objects of nature,

[1] Burke's writings are not poetry, notwithstanding the vividness of the fancy, because the subject matter is abstruse and dry, not natural, but artificial. The difference between poetry and eloquence is, that the one is the eloquence of the imagination, and the other of the understanding. Eloquence tries to persuade the will, and convince the reason: poetry produces its effect by instantaneous sympathy. Nothing is a subject for poetry that admits of a dispute. Poets are in general bad prose-writers, because their images, though fine in themselves, are not to the purpose, and do not carry on the argument. The French poetry wants the forms of the imagination. It is didactic more than dramatic. And some of our own poetry which has been most admired, is only poetry in the rhyme, and in the studied use of poetic diction.

and enters into all the relations of social life. He saw many countries, and the manners of many men; and he has brought them all together in his poem. He describes his heroes going to battle with a prodigality of life, arising from an exuberance of animal spirits: we see them before us, their number, and their order of battle, poured out upon the plain 'all plumed like estriches, like eagles newly bathed, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls, youthful as May, and gorgeous as the sun at midsummer,' covered with glittering armour, with dust and blood; while the Gods quaff their nectar in golden cups, or mingle in the fray; and the old men assembled on the walls of Troy rise up with reverence as Helen passes by them. The multitude of things in Homer is wonderful; their splendour, their truth, their force, and variety. His poetry is, like his religion, the poetry of number and form: he describes the bodies as well as the souls of men.

The poetry of the Bible is that of imagination and of faith: it is abstract and disembodied: it is not the poetry of form, but of power; not of multitude, but of immensity. It does not divide into many, but aggrandizes into one. Its ideas of nature are like its ideas of God. It is not the poetry of social life, but of solitude: each man seems alone in the world, with the original forms of nature, the rocks, the earth, and the sky. It is not the poetry of action or heroic enterprise, but of faith in a supreme Providence, and resignation to the power that governs the universe. As the idea of God was removed farther from humanity, and a scattered polytheism, it became more profound and intense, as it became more universal, for the Infinite is present to every thing: 'If we fly into the uttermost parts of the earth, it is there also; if we turn to the east or the west, we cannot escape from it.' Man is thus aggrandised in the image of his Maker. The history of the patriarchs is of this kind; they are founders of a chosen race of people, the inheritors of the earth; they exist in the generations which are to come after them. Their poetry, like their religious creed, is vast, unformed, obscure, and infinite; a vision is upon it—an invisible hand is suspended over it. The spirit of the Christian religion consists in the glory hereafter to be revealed; but in the Hebrew dispensation, Providence took an immediate share in the affairs of this life. Jacob's dream arose out of this intimate communion between heaven and earth: it was this that let down, in the sight of the youthful patriarch, a golden ladder from the sky to the earth, with angels ascending and descending upon it, and shed a light upon the lonely place, which can never pass away. The story of Ruth, again, is as if all the depth of natural affection in the human race was involved in her breast. There are descriptions in

the book of Job more prodigal of imagery, more intense in passion, than any thing in Homer, as that of the state of his prosperity, and of the vision that came upon him by night. The metaphors in the Old Testament are more boldly figurative. Things were collected more into masses, and gave a greater *momentum* to the imagination.

Dante was the father of modern poetry, and he may therefore claim a place in this connection. His poem is the first great step from Gothic darkness and barbarism; and the struggle of thought in it to burst the thraldom in which the human mind had been so long held, is felt in every page. He stood bewildered, not appalled, on that dark shore which separates the ancient and the modern world; and saw the glories of antiquity dawning through the abyss of time, while revelation opened its passage to the other world. He was lost in wonder at what had been done before him, and he dared to emulate it. Dante seems to have been indebted to the Bible for the gloomy tone of his mind, as well as for the prophetic fury which exalts and kindles his poetry; but he is utterly unlike Homer. His genius is not a sparkling flame, but the sullen heat of a furnace. He is power, passion, self-will personified. In all that relates to the descriptive or fanciful part of poetry, he bears no comparison to many who had gone before, or who have come after him; but there is a gloomy abstraction in his conceptions, which lies like a dead weight upon the mind; a benumbing stupor, a breathless awe, from the intensity of the impression; a terrible obscurity, like that which oppresses us in dreams; an identity of interest, which moulds every object to its own purposes, and clothes all things with the passions and imaginations of the human soul,—that make amends for all other deficiencies. The immediate objects he presents to the mind are not much in themselves, they want grandeur, beauty, and order; but they become every thing by the force of the character he impresses upon them. His mind lends its own power to the objects which it contemplates, instead of borrowing it from them. He takes advantage even of the nakedness and dreary vacuity of his subject. His imagination peoples the shades of death, and broods over the silent air. He is the severest of all writers, the most hard and impenetrable, the most opposite to the flowery and glittering; who relies most on his own power, and the sense of it in others, and who leaves most room to the imagination of his readers. Dante's only endeavour is to interest; and he interests by exciting our sympathy with the emotion by which he is himself possessed. He does not place before us the objects by which that emotion has been created; but he seizes on the attention, by shewing us the effect they produce on his feelings; and his poetry accordingly gives the same thrilling and overwhelming sensation,

which is caught by gazing on the face of a person who has seen some object of horror. The improbability of the events, the abruptness and monotony in the Inferno, are excessive: but the interest never flags, from the continued earnestness of the author's mind. Dante's great power is in combining internal feelings with external objects. Thus the gate of hell, on which that withering inscription is written, seems to be endowed with speech and consciousness, and to utter its dread warning, not without a sense of mortal woes. This author habitually unites the absolutely local and individual with the greatest wildness and mysticism. In the midst of the obscure and shadowy regions of the lower world, a tomb suddenly rises up with the inscription, 'I am the tomb of Pope Anastasius the Sixth': and half the personages whom he has crowded into the Inferno are his own acquaintance. All this, perhaps, tends to heighten the effect by the bold intermixture of realities, and by an appeal, as it were, to the individual knowledge and experience of the reader. He affords few subjects for picture. There is, indeed, one gigantic one, that of Count Ugolino, of which Michael Angelo made a bas-relief, and which Sir Joshua Reynolds ought not to have painted.

Another writer whom I shall mention last, and whom I cannot persuade myself to think a mere modern in the groundwork, is Ossian. He is a feeling and a name that can never be destroyed in the minds of his readers. As Homer is the first vigour and lustihed, Ossian is the decay and old age of poetry. He lives only in the recollection and regret of the past. There is one impression which he conveys more entirely than all other poets, namely, the sense of privation, the loss of all things, of friends, of good name, of country—he is even without God in the world. He converses only with the spirits of the departed; with the motionless and silent clouds. The cold moonlight sheds its faint lustre on his head; the fox peeps out of the ruined tower; the thistle waves its beard to the wandering gale; and the strings of his harp seem, as the hand of age, as the tale of other times, passes over them, to sigh and rustle like the dry reeds in the winter's wind! The feeling of cheerless desolation, of the loss of the pith and sap of existence, of the annihilation of the substance, and the clinging to the shadow of all things as in a mock-embrace, is here perfect. In this way, the lamentation of Selma for the loss of Salgar is the finest of all. If it were indeed possible to shew that this writer was nothing, it would only be another instance of mutability, another blank made, another void left in the heart, another confirmation of that feeling which makes him so often complain, 'Roll on, ye dark brown years, ye bring no joy on your wing to Ossian!'

ON CHAUCER AND SPENSER

LECTURE II

ON CHAUCER AND SPENSER

Having, in the former Lecture, given some account of the nature of poetry in general, I shall proceed, in the next place, to a more particular consideration of the genius and history of English poetry. I shall take, as the subject of the present lecture, Chaucer and Spenser, two out of four of the greatest names in poetry, which this country has to boast. Both of them, however, were much indebted to the early poets of Italy, and may be considered as belonging, in a certain degree, to the same school. The freedom and copiousness with which our most original writers, in former periods, availed themselves of the productions of their predecessors, frequently transcribing whole passages, without scruple or acknowledgment, may appear contrary to the etiquette of modern literature, when the whole stock of poetical common-places has become public property, and no one is compelled to trade upon any particular author. But it is not so much a subject of wonder, at a time when to read and write was of itself an honorary distinction, when learning was almost as great a rarity as genius, and when in fact those who first transplanted the beauties of other languages into their own, might be considered as public benefactors, and the founders of a national literature.—There are poets older than Chaucer, and in the interval between him and Spenser; but their genius was not such as to place them in any point of comparison with either of these celebrated men; and an inquiry into their particular merits or defects might seem rather to belong to the province of the antiquary, than be thought generally interesting to the lovers of poetry in the present day.

Chaucer (who has been very properly considered as the father of English poetry) preceded Spenser by two centuries. He is supposed to have been born in London, in the year 1328, during the reign of Edward III. and to have died in 1400, at the age of seventy-two. He received a learned education at one, or at both of the universities, and travelled early into Italy, where he became thoroughly imbued with the spirit and excellences of the great Italian poets and prose-writers, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccace; and is said to have had a personal interview with one of these, Petrarch. He was connected, by marriage, with the famous John of Gaunt, through whose interest he was introduced into several public employments. Chaucer was an active partisan, a religious reformer, and from the share he took in some disturbances, on one occasion, he was obliged to fly the country.

On his return, he was imprisoned, and made his peace with government, as it is said, by a discovery of his associates. Fortitude does not appear, at any time, to have been the distinguishing virtue of poets. —There is, however, an obvious similarity between the practical turn of Chaucer's mind and restless impatience of his character, and the tone of his writings. Yet it would be too much to attribute the one to the other as cause and effect: for Spenser, whose poetical temperament was an effeminate as Chaucer's was stern and masculine, was equally engaged in public affairs, and had mixed equally in the great world. So much does native disposition predominate over accidental circumstances, moulding them to its previous bent and purposes! For while Chaucer's intercourse with the busy world, and collision with the actual passions and conflicting interests of others, seemed to brace the sinews of his understanding, and gave to his writings the air of a man who describes persons and things that he had known and been intimately concerned in; the same opportunities, operating on a differently constituted frame, only served to alienate Spenser's mind the more from the 'close-pent up' scenes of ordinary life, and to make him 'rive their concealing continents,' to give himself up to the unrestrained indulgence of 'flowery tenderness.'

It is not possible for any two writers to be more opposite in this respect. Spenser delighted in luxurious enjoyment; Chaucer, in severe activity of mind. As Spenser was the most romantic and visionary, Chaucer was the most practical of all the great poets, the most a man of business and the world. His poetry reads like history. Every thing has a downright reality; at least in the relator's mind. A simile, or a sentiment, is as if it were given in upon evidence. Thus he describes Cressid's first avowal of her love.

'And as the new abashed nightingale,
That stinteth first when she beginneth sing,
When that she heareth any herde's tale,
Or in the hedges any wight stirring,
And after, sicker, doth her voice outring;
Right so Cresseide, when that her dread stent,
Open'd her heart, and told him her intent.'

This is so true and natural, and beautifully simple, that the two things seem identified with each other. Again, it is said in the Knight's Tale—

'Thus passeth yere by yere, and day by day,
Till it felle ones in a morwe of May,
That Emelie that fayrer was to sene
Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene;

And fresher than the May with floures newe,
For with the rose-colour strof hire hewe:
I n'ot which was the finer of hem two.'

This scrupulousness about the literal preference, as if some question of matter of fact was at issue, is remarkable. I might mention that other, where he compares the meeting between Palamon and Arcite to a hunter waiting for a lion in a gap;—

'That stondeth at a gap with a spere,
Whan hunted is the lion or the bere,
And hereth him come rushing in the greves,
And breking both the boughes and the leves:'—

or that still finer one of Constance, when she is condemned to death:—

'Have ye not seen somtime a pale face
(Among a prees) of him that hath been lad
Toward his deth, wheras he geteth no grace,
And swiche a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighten know him that was so bestad,
Amonges all the faces in that route;
So stant Custance, and loketh hire aboute.'

The beauty, the pathos here does not seem to be of the poet's seeking, but a part of the necessary texture of the fable. He speaks of what he wishes to describe with the accuracy, the discrimination of one who relates what has happened to himself, or has had the best information from those who have been eye-witnesses of it. The strokes of his pencil always tell. He dwells only on the essential, on that which would be interesting to the persons really concerned: yet as he never omits any material circumstance, he is prolix from the number of points on which he touches, without being diffuse on any one; and is sometimes tedious from the fidelity with which he adheres to his subject, as other writers are from the frequency of their digressions from it. The chain of his story is composed of a number of fine links, closely connected together, and rivetted by a single blow. There is an instance of the minuteness which he introduces into his most serious descriptions in his account of Palamon when left alone in his cell:

'Swiche sorrow he maketh that the grete tour
Resouned of his yelling and clamour:
The pure fetters on his shinnes grete
Were of his bitter salte teres wete.'

The mention of this last circumstance looks like a part of the instructions he had to follow, which he had no discretionary power to leave out or introduce at pleasure. He is contented to find grace and beauty in truth. He exhibits for the most part the naked object, with little drapery thrown over it. His metaphors, which are few, are not for ornament, but use, and as like as possible to the things themselves. He does not affect to shew his power over the reader's mind, but the power which his subject has over his own. The readers of Chaucer's poetry feel more nearly what the persons he describes must have felt, than perhaps those of any other poet. His sentiments are not voluntary effusions of the poet's fancy, but founded on the natural impulses and habitual prejudices of the characters he has to represent. There is an inveteracy of purpose, a sincerity of feeling, which never relaxes or grows vapid, in whatever they do or say. There is no artificial, pompous display, but a strict parsimony of the poet's materials, like the rude simplicity of the age in which he lived. His poetry resembles the root just springing from the ground, rather than the full-blown flower. His muse is no 'babbling gossip of the air,' fluent and redundant; but, like a stammerer, or a dumb person, that has just found the use of speech, crowds many things together with eager haste, with anxious pauses, and fond repetitions to prevent mistake. His words point as an index to the objects, like the eye or finger. There were none of the common-places of poetic diction in our author's time, no reflected lights of fancy, no borrowed roseate tints; he was obliged to inspect things for himself, to look narrowly, and almost to handle the object, as in the obscurity of morning we partly see and partly grope our way; so that his descriptions have a sort of tangible character belonging to them, and produce the effect of sculpture on the mind. Chaucer had an equal eye for truth of nature and discrimination of character; and his interest in what he saw gave new distinctness and force to his power of observation. The picturesque and the dramatic are in him closely blended together, and hardly distinguishable; for he principally describes external appearances as indicating character, as symbols of internal sentiment. There is a meaning in what he sees; and it is this which catches his eye by sympathy. Thus the costume and dress of the Canterbury Pilgrims—of the Knight—the Squire—the Oxford Scholar—the Gap-toothed Wife of Bath, and the rest, speak for themselves. To take one or two of these at random:

'There was also a nonne, a Prioresse,
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;
Hire gretest othe n'as but by seint Eloy:

And she was cleped Madame Eglentine.
Ful wel she sange the service divine
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.
At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle;
She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.

* * * * * * *

And sikerly she was of great disport,
And ful plesant, and amiable of port,
And peined hire to contrefeten chere
Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede.
But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert:
And all was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was;
Hire nose tretis; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smale; and therto soft and red;
But sickerly she hadde a fayre forehed.
It was almost a spanne brode, I trowe.'

A Monk there was, a fayre for the maistrie,
An out-rider, that loved venerie:
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deinte hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rode, men mighte his bridel here,
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clere,
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.
The reule of Seint Maure and of Seint Beneit,
Because that it was olde and somdele streit,
This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,
And held after the newe world the trace.
He yave not of the text a pulled hen,
That saith, that hunters ben not holy men;—
Therfore he was a prickasoure a right:
Greihoundes he hadde as swift as foul of flight:
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.

I saw his sleves purfiled at the hond
With gris, and that the finest of the lond.
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,
He had of gold ywrought a curious pinne:
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.
His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,
And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.
His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed,
That stemed as a forneis of a led.
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.
He was not pale as a forpined gost.
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.'

The Serjeant at Law is the same identical individual as Lawyer Dowling in Tom Jones, who wished to divide himself into a hundred pieces, to be in a hundred places at once.

'No wher so besy a man as he ther n'as,
And yet he semed besier than he was.'

The Frankelein, in 'whose hous it snewed of mete and drinke'; the Shipman, 'who rode upon a rouncie, as he couthe'; the Doctour of Phisike, 'whose studie was but litel of the Bible'; the Wif of Bath, in

'All whose parish ther was non,
That to the offring before hire shulde gon,
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee;'

—the poure Persone of a toun, 'whose parish was wide, and houses fer asonder'; the Miller, and the Reve, 'a slendre colerike man,' are all of the same stamp. They are every one samples of a kind; abstract definitions of a species. Chaucer, it has been said, numbered the classes of men, as Linnæus numbered the plants. Most of them remain to this day: others that are obsolete, and may well be dispensed with, still live in his descriptions of them. Such is the Sompnoure:

'A Sompnoure was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fire-red cherubinnes face,
For sausefleme he was, with eyen narwe,
As hote he was, and likerous as a sparwe,
With scalled browes blake, and pilled berd:
Of his visage children were sore aferd.

Ther n'as quicksilver, litarge, ne brimston,
Boras, ceruse, ne oile of tartre non,
Ne oinement that wolde clense or bite,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes sitting on his chekes.
Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,
And for to drinke strong win as rede as blood.
Than wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken had the win,
Than wold he speken no word but Latin.
A fewe termes coude he, two or three,
That he had lerned out of som decree;
No wonder is, he heard it all the day.—
In danger hadde he at his owen gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was of hir rede.
A gerlond hadde he sette upon his hede
As gret as it were for an alestake:
A bokeler hadde he made him of a cake.
With him ther rode a gentil Pardonere—
That hadde a vois as smale as hath a gote.'

It would be a curious speculation (at least for those who think that the characters of men never change, though manners, opinions, and institutions may) to know what has become of this character of the Sompnoure in the present day; whether or not it has any technical representative in existing professions; into what channels and conduits it has withdrawn itself, where it lurks unseen in cunning obscurity, or else shews its face boldly, pampered into all the insolence of office, in some other shape, as it is deterred or encouraged by circumstances. *Chaucer's characters modernised*, upon this principle of historic derivation, would be an useful addition to our knowledge of human nature. But who is there to undertake it?

The descriptions of the equipage, and accoutrements of the two kings of Thrace and Inde, in the Knight's Tale, are as striking and grand, as the others are lively and natural:

'Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon
Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace:
Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his hed
They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,
And like a griffon loked he about,
With kemped heres on his browes stout;
His limmes gret, his braunes hard and stronge,
His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.

And as the guise was in his contree,
Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he,
With foure white bolles in the trais.
Instede of cote-armure on his harnais,
With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,
He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.
His longe here was kempt behind his bak,
As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.
A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,
Upon his hed sate full of stones bright,
Of fine rubins and of diamants.
About his char ther wenten white alauns,
Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,
To hunten at the leon or the dere,
And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound.—
With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The grete Emetrius, the king of Inde,
Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,
Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,
Came riding like the god of armes Mars.
His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles, white, and round and grete.
His sadel was of brent gold new ybete;
A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging
Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
His crispe here like ringes was yronne,
And that was yelwe, and glitered as the Sonne.
His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,
His lippes round, his colour was sanguin,
A fewe fraknes in his face yspreint,
Betwixen yelwe and blake somdel ymeint,
And as a leon he his loking caste.
Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.
His berd was wel begonnen for to spring;
His vois was as a trompe thondering.
Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene
A gerlond freshe and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bare for his deduit
An egle tame, as any lily whit.—
About this king ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame leon and leopart.'

What a deal of terrible beauty there is contained in this description! The imagination of a poet brings such objects before us, as when we look at wild beasts in a menagerie; their claws are pared, their eyes glitter like harmless lightning; but we gaze at them with a pleasing awe, clothed in beauty, formidable in the sense of abstract power.

Chaucer's descriptions of natural scenery possess the same sort of

characteristic excellence, or what might be termed *gusto*. They have a local truth and freshness, which gives the very feeling of the air, the coolness or moisture of the ground. Inanimate objects are thus made to have a fellow-feeling in the interest of the story; and render back the sentiment of the speaker's mind. One of the finest parts of Chaucer is of this mixed kind. It is the beginning of the Flower and the Leaf, where he describes the delight of that young beauty, shrowded in her bower, and listening, in the morning of the year, to the singing of the nightingale; while her joy rises with the rising song, and gushes out afresh at every pause, and is borne along with the full tide of pleasure, and still increases and repeats, and prolongs itself, and knows no ebb. The coolness of the arbour, its retirement, the early time of the day, the sudden starting up of the birds in the neighbouring bushes, the eager delight with which they devour and rend the opening buds and flowers, are expressed with a truth and feeling, which make the whole appear like the recollection of an actual scene:

'Which as me thought was right a pleasing sight,
And eke the briddes song for to here,
Would haue rejoyced any earthly wight,
And I that couth not yet in no manere
Heare the nightingale of all the yeare,
Ful busily herkened with herte and with eare,
If I her voice perceiue coud any where.

And I that all this pleasaunt sight sie,
Thought sodainly I felt so sweet an aire
Of the eglentere, that certainely
There is no herte I deme in such dispaire,
Ne with thoughts froward and contraire,
So ouerlaid, but it should soone haue bote,
If it had ones felt this savour sote.

And as I stood and cast aside mine eie,
I was ware of the fairest medler tree
That ever yet in all my life I sie
As full of blossomes as it might be,
Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile
Fro bough to bough, and as him list he eet
Here and there of buds and floures sweet.

And to the herber side was joyning
This faire tree, of which I haue you told,
And at the last the brid began to sing,
Whan he had eaten what he eat wold,
So passing sweetly, that by manifold
It was more pleasaunt than I coud deuise,
And whan his song was ended in this wise,

The nightingale with so merry a note
Answered him, that all the wood rong
So sodainly, that as it were a sote,
I stood astonied, so was I with the song
Thorow rauished, that till late and long,
I ne wist in what place I was, ne where,
And ayen me thought she song euen by mine ere.

Wherefore I waited about busily
On euery side, if I her might see,
And at the last I gan full well aspie
Where she sat in a fresh grene laurer tree,
On the further side euen right by me,
That gaue so passing a delicious smell,
According to the eglentere full well.

Whereof I had so inly great pleasure,
That as me thought I surely rauished was
Into Paradice, where my desire
Was for to be, and no ferther passe
As for that day, and on the sote grasse,
I sat me downe, for as for mine entent,
The birds song was more conuenient,

And more pleasaunt to me by manifold,
Than meat or drinke, or any other thing,
Thereto the herber was so fresh and cold,
The wholesome sauours eke so comforting,
That as I demed, sith the beginning
Of the world was neur seene or than
So pleasaunt a ground of none earthly man.

And as I sat the birds harkening thus,
Me thought that I heard voices sodainly,
The most sweetest and most delicious
That euer any wight I trow truly
Heard in their life, for the armony
And sweet accord was in so good musike,
That the uoice to angels was most like.'

There is here no affected rapture, no flowery sentiment: the whole is an ebullition of natural delight 'welling out of the heart,' like water from a crystal spring. Nature is the soul of art: there is a strength as well as a simplicity in the imagination that reposes entirely on nature, that nothing else can supply. It was the same trust in nature, and reliance on his subject, which enabled Chaucer to describe the grief and patience of Griselda; the faith of Constance; and the

heroic perseverance of the little child, who, going to school through the streets of Jewry,

'Oh *Alma Redemptoris mater*, loudly sung,'

and who after his death still triumphed in his song. Chaucer has more of this deep, internal, sustained sentiment, than any other writer, except Boccaccio. In depth of simple pathos, and intensity of conception, never swerving from his subject, I think no other writer comes near him, not even the Greek tragedians. I wish to be allowed to give one or two instances of what I mean. I will take the following from the Knight's Tale. The distress of Arcite, in consequence of his banishment from his love, is thus described:

'Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful oft a day he swelt and said Alas,
For sene his lady shall be never mo.
And shortly to concluden all his wo,
So mochel sorwe hadde never creature,
That is or shall be, while the world may dure.
His slepe, his mete, his drinke is him byraft.
That lene he wex, and drie as is a shaft.
His eyen holwe, and grisly to behold,
His hewe salwe, and pale as ashen cold,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Than wold he wepe, he mighte not be stent.
So feble were his spirites, and so low,
And changed so, that no man coude know
His speche ne his vois, though men it herd.'

This picture of the sinking of the heart, of the wasting away of the body and mind, of the gradual failure of all the faculties under the contagion of a rankling sorrow, cannot be surpassed. Of the same kind is his farewel to his mistress, after he has gained her hand and lost his life in the combat:

'Alas the wo! alas the peines stronge,
That I for you have suffered, and so longe!
Alas the deth! alas min Emilie!
Alas departing of our compagnie:
Alas min hertes quene! alas my wif!
Min hertes ladie, ender of my lif!
What is this world? what axen men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Alone withouten any compagnie.'

The death of Arcite is the more affecting, as it comes after triumph and victory, after the pomp of sacrifice, the solemnities of prayer, the celebration of the gorgeous rites of chivalry. The descriptions of the three temples of Mars, of Venus, and Diana, of the ornaments and ceremonies used in each, with the reception given to the offerings of the lovers, have a beauty and grandeur, much of which is lost in Dryden's version. For instance, such lines as the following are not rendered with their true feeling.

'Why shulde I not as well eke tell you all
The purtreiture that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the rede—
That highte the gret temple of Mars in Trace
In thilke colde and frosty region,
Ther as Mars hath his sovereine mansion.
First on the wall was peinted a forest,
In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,
With knotty knarry barrein trees old
Of stubbes sharpe and hideous to behold;
In which ther ran a romble and a swough,
As though a storme shuld bresten every bough.'

And again, among innumerable terrific images of death and slaughter painted on the wall, is this one:

'The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and looked grim as he were wood.
A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete
With eyen red, and of a man he ete.'

The story of Griselda is in Boccaccio; but the Clerk of Oxenforde, who tells it, professes to have learned it from Petrarch. This story has gone all over Europe, and has passed into a proverb. In spite of the barbarity of the circumstances, which are abominable, the sentiment remains unimpaired and unalterable. It is of that kind, 'that heaves no sigh, that sheds no tear'; but it hangs upon the beatings of the heart; it is a part of the very being; it is as inseparable from it as the breath we draw. It is still and calm as the face of death. Nothing can touch it in its ethereal purity: tender as the yielding flower, it is fixed as the marble firmament. The only remonstrance she makes, the only complaint she utters against all the ill-treatment she receives, is that single line where, when turned back naked to her father's house, she says,

'Let me not like a worm go by the way.'

ON CHAUCER AND SPENSER

The first outline given of the character is inimitable:

'Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable,
Wher as this markis shope his mariage,
Ther stood a thorpe, of sighte delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir bestes and her herbergage,
And of hir labour toke hir sustenance,
After that the earthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man,
Which that was holden pourest of hem all:
But highe God sometime senden can
His grace unto a litel oxes stall:
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to sight,
And Grisildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Than was she on the fairest under Sonne:
Ful pourely yfostred up was she:
No likerous lust was in hire herte yronne;
Ful ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for she wolde vertue plese,
She knew wel labour, but non idel ese.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed sad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde poure fader fostred she:
A few sheep spinning on the feld she kept,
She wolde not ben idel til she slept.

And whan she homward came she wolde bring
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which she shred and sethe for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing soft:
And ay she kept hire fadres lif on loft
With every obeisance and diligence,
That child may don to fadres reverence,

Upon Grisilde, this poure creature,
Ful often sithe this markis sette his sye,
As he on hunting rode paraventure:
And whan it fell that he might hire espie,
He not with wanton loking of folie
His eyen cast on hire, but in sad wise
Upon hire chere he wold him oft avise,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,
And eke hire vertue, passing any wight
Of so yong age, as wel in chere as dede.
For though the people have no gret insight
In vertue, he considered ful right
Hire bountee, and disposed that he wold
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden shold.

Grisilde of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hire shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh home as sone as ever she may.
For wel she had herd say, that thilke day
The markis shulde wedde, and, if she might,
She wolde fayn han seen som of that sight.

She thought, "I wol with other maidens stond,
That ben my felawes, in our dore, and see
The markisesse, and therto wol I fond
To don at home, as sone as it may be,
The labour which longeth unto me,
And than I may at leiser hire behold,
If she this way unto the castel hold."

And she wolde over the threswold gon,
The markis came and gan hire for to call,
And she set doun her water-pot anon
Beside the threswold in an oxes stall,
And doun upon hire knees she gan to fall.
And with sad countenance kneleth still,
Till she had herd what was the lordes will.'

The story of the little child slain in Jewry, (which is told by the Prioress, and worthy to be told by her who was 'all conscience and tender heart,') is not less touching than that of Griselda. It is simple and heroic to the last degree. The poetry of Chaucer has a religious sanctity about it, connected with the manners and superstitions of the age. It has all the spirit of martyrdom.

It has also all the extravagance and the utmost licentiousness of comic humour, equally arising out of the manners of the time. In this too Chaucer resembled Boccaccio that he excelled in both styles, and could pass at will 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe'; but he never confounded the two styles together (except from that involuntary and unconscious mixture of the pathetic and humorous, which is almost always to be found in nature,) and was exclusively taken up with what he set about, whether it was jest or earnest. The Wife of Bath's Prologue (which Pope has very admirably modern-

ised) is, perhaps, unequalled as a comic story. The Cock and the Fox is also excellent for lively strokes of character and satire. January and May is not so good as some of the others. Chaucer's versification, considering the time at which he wrote, and that versification is a thing in a great degree mechanical, is not one of his least merits. It has considerable strength and harmony, and its apparent deficiency in the latter respect arises chiefly from the alterations which have since taken place in the pronunciation or mode of accenting the words of the language. The best general rule for reading him is to pronounce the final *e*, as in reading Italian.

It was observed in the last Lecture that painting describes what the object is in itself, poetry what it implies or suggests. Chaucer's poetry is not, in general, the best confirmation of the truth of this distinction, for his poetry is more picturesque and historical than almost any other. But there is one instance in point which I cannot help giving in this place. It is the story of the three thieves who go in search of Death to kill him, and who meeting with him, are entangled in their fate by his words, without knowing him. In the printed catalogue to Mr. West's (in some respects very admirable) picture of Death on the Pale Horse, it is observed, that 'In poetry the same effect is produced by a few abrupt and rapid gleams of description, touching, as it were with fire, the features and edges of a general mass of awful obscurity; but in painting, such indistinctness would be a defect, and imply that the artist wanted the power to pourtray the conceptions of his fancy. Mr. West was of opinion that to delineate a physical form, which in its moral impression would approximate to that of the visionary Death of Milton, it was necessary to endow it, if possible, with the appearance of super-human strength and energy. He has therefore exerted the utmost force and perspicuity of his pencil on the central figure.'—One might suppose from this, that the way to represent a shadow was to make it as substantial as possible. Oh, no! Painting has its prerogatives, (and high ones they are) but they lie in representing the visible, not the invisible. The moral attributes of Death are powers and effects of an infinitely wide and general description, which no individual or physical form can possibly represent, but by a courtesy of speech, or by a distant analogy. The moral impression of Death is essentially visionary; its reality is in the mind's eye. Words are here the only *things*; and things, physical forms, the mere mockeries of the understanding. The less definite, the less bodily the conception, the more vast, unformed, and unsubstantial, the nearer does it approach to some resemblance of that omnipresent, lasting, universal, irresistible principle, which every where, and at some time or other, exerts its power over

a damsel in a boat upon an enchanted lake, wood-nymphs, and satyrs; and all of a sudden you are transported into a lofty palace, with tapers burning, amidst knights and ladies, with dance and revelry, and song, 'and mask, and antique pageantry.' What can be more solitary, more shut up in itself, than his description of the house of Sleep, to which Archimago sends for a dream:

'And more to lull him in his slumber soft
A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
And ever-drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mix'd with a murmuring wind, much like the sound
Of swarming Bees, did cast him in a swound.
No other noise, nor people's troublous cries.
That still are wont t' annoy the walled town
Might there be heard; but careless Quiet lies
Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies.'

It is as if 'the honey-heavy dew of slumber' had settled on his pen in writing these lines. How different in the subject (and yet how like in beauty) is the following description of the Bower of Bliss:

'Eftsoones they heard a most melodious sound
Of all that mote delight a dainty ear;
Such as at once might not on living ground,
Save in this Paradise, be heard elsewhere:
Right hard it was for wight which did it hear,
To tell what manner musicke that mote be;
For all that pleasing is to living eare
Was there consorted in one harmonee:
Birds, voices, instruments, windes, waters, all agree.

The joyous birdes shrouded in chearefull shade
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet:
The angelical soft trembling voices made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet.
The silver sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the water's fall;
The water's fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.'

The remainder of the passage has all that voluptuous pathos, and languid brilliancy of fancy, in which this writer excelled:

'The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay;
Ah! see, whoso fayre thing dost thou fain to see,
In springing flower the image of thy day!
Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly she

Doth first peep forth with bashful modesty,
That fairer seems the less ye see her may!
Lo! see soon after, how more bold and free
Her bared bosom she doth broad display;
Lo! see soon after, how she fades and falls away!

So passeth in the passing of a day
Of mortal life the leaf, the bud, the flower;
Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower
Of many a lady and many a paramour!
Gather therefore the rose whilst yet is prime,
For soon comes age that will her pride deflower;
Gather the rose of love whilst yet is time,
Whilst loving thou mayst loved be with equal crime.[1]

He ceased; and then gan all the quire of birds
Their divers notes to attune unto his lay,
As in approvance of his pleasing wordes.
The constant pair heard all that he did say,
Yet swerved not, but kept their forward way
Through many covert groves and thickets close,
In which they creeping did at last display[2]
That wanton lady with her lover loose,
Whose sleepy head she in her lap did soft dispose.

Upon a bed of roses she was laid
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin;
And was arrayed or rather disarrayed,
All in a veil of silk and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewed more white, if more might be:
More subtle web Arachne cannot spin;
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched dew, do not in the air more lightly flee.

Her snowy breast was bare to greedy spoil
Of hungry eyes which n' ote therewith be fill'd,
And yet through languor of her late sweet toil
Few drops more clear than nectar forth distill'd,
That like pure Orient perles adown it trill'd;
And her fair eyes sweet smiling in delight
Moisten'd their fiery beams, with which she thrill'd
Frail hearts, yet quenched not; like starry light,
Which sparkling on the silent waves does seem more bright.'

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[1] Taken from Tasso.

[2] This word is an instance of those unwarrantable freedoms which Spenser sometimes took with language.

The finest things in Spenser are, the character of Una, in the first book; the House of Pride; the Cave of Mammon, and the Cave of Despair; the account of Memory, of whom it is said, among other things,

> 'The wars he well remember'd of King Nine,
> Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine';

the description of Belphœbe; the story of Florimel and the Witch's son; the Gardens of Adonis, and the Bower of Bliss; the Mask of Cupid; and Colin Clout's vision, in the last book. But some people will say that all this may be very fine, but that they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them: they look at it as a child looks at a painted dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with them. Without minding it at all, the whole is as plain as a pike-staff. It might as well be pretended that, we cannot see Poussin's pictures for the allegory, as that the allegory prevents us from understanding Spenser. For instance, when Britomart, seated amidst the young warriors, lets fall her hair and discovers her sex, is it necessary to know the part she plays in the allegory, to understand the beauty of the following stanza?

> 'And eke that stranger knight amongst the rest
> Was for like need enforc'd to disarray.
> Tho when as vailed was her lofty crest,
> Her golden locks that were in trammels gay
> Upbounden, did themselves adown display,
> And raught unto her heels like sunny beams
> That in a cloud their light did long time stay;
> Their vapour faded, shew their golden gleams,
> And through the persant air shoot forth their azure streams.'

Or is there any mystery in what is said of Belphœbe, that her hair was sprinkled with flowers and blossoms which had been entangled in it as she fled through the woods? Or is it necessary to have a more distinct idea of Proteus, than that which is given of him in his boat, with the frighted Florimel at his feet, while

> '—— the cold icicles from his rough beard
> Dropped adown upon her snowy breast!'

Or is it not a sufficient account of one of the sea-gods that pass by them, to say—

> 'That was Arion crowned:—
> So went he playing on the watery plain.'

Or to take the Procession of the Passions that draw the coach of Pride, in which the figures of Idleness, of Gluttony, of Lechery, of Avarice, of Envy, and of Wrath speak, one should think, plain enough for themselves; such as this of Gluttony:

'And by his side rode loathsome Gluttony,
Deformed creature, on a filthy swine;
His belly was up blown with luxury;
And eke with fatness swollen were his eyne;
And like a crane his neck was long and fine,
With which he swallowed up excessive feast,
For want whereof poor people oft did pine.

In green vine leaves he was right fitly clad;
For other clothes he could not wear for heat:
And on his head an ivy garland had,
From under which fast trickled down the sweat:
Still as he rode, he somewhat still did eat.
And in his hand did bear a bouzing can,
Of which he supt so oft, that on his seat
His drunken corse he scarce upholden can;
In shape and size more like a monster than a man.'

Or this of Lechery:

'And next to him rode lustfull Lechery
Upon a bearded goat, whose rugged hair
And whaly eyes (the sign of jealousy)
Was like the person's self whom he did bear:
Who rough and black, and filthy did appear.
Unseemly man to please fair lady's eye:
Yet he of ladies oft was loved dear,
When fairer faces were bid standen by:
O! who does know the bent of woman's fantasy?

In a green gown he clothed was full fair,
Which underneath did hide his filthiness;
And in his hand a burning heart he bare,
Full of vain follies and new fangleness;
For he was false and fraught with fickleness;
And learned had to love with secret looks;
And well could dance; and sing with ruefulness;
And fortunes tell; and read in loving books;
And thousand other ways to bait his fleshly hooks.

Inconstant man that loved all he saw,
And lusted after all that he did love;
Ne would his looser life be tied to law;
But joyed weak women's hearts to tempt and prove,
If from their loyal loves he might them move.'

This is pretty plain-spoken. Mr. Southey says of Spenser:

'————Yet not more sweet
Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise;
High priest of all the Muses' mysteries!'

On the contrary, no one was more apt to pry into mysteries which do not strictly belong to the Muses.

Of the same kind with the Procession of the Passions, as little obscure, and still more beautiful, is the Mask of Cupid, with his train of votaries:

'The first was Fancy, like a lovely boy
Of rare aspect, and beauty without peer;

His garment neither was of silk nor say,
But painted plumes in goodly order dight,
Like as the sun-burnt Indians do array
Their tawny bodies in their proudest plight:
As those same plumes so seem'd he vain and light,
That by his gait might easily appear;
For still he far'd as dancing in delight,
And in his hand a windy fan did bear
That in the idle air he mov'd still here and there.

And him beside march'd amorous Desire,
Who seem'd of riper years than the other swain,
Yet was that other swain this elder's sire,
And gave him being, common to them twain:
His garment was disguised very vain,
And his embroidered bonnet sat awry;
Twixt both his hands few sparks he close did strain,
Which still he blew, and kindled busily,
That soon they life conceiv'd and forth in flames did fly.

Next after him went Doubt, who was yclad
In a discolour'd coat of strange disguise,
That at his back a broad capuccio had,
And sleeves dependant *Albanese-wise*;
He lookt askew with his mistrustful eyes,
And nicely trod, as thorns lay in his way,
Or that the floor to shrink he did avise;
And on a broken reed he still did stay
His feeble steps, which shrunk when hard thereon he lay.

With him went Daunger, cloth'd in ragged weed,
Made of bear's skin, that him more dreadful made;
Yet his own face was dreadfull, ne did need
Strange horror to deform his grisly shade;

A net in th' one hand, and a rusty blade
In th' other was; this Mischiefe, that Mishap;
With th' one his foes he threat'ned to invade,
With th' other he his friends meant to enwrap;
For whom he could not kill he practiz'd to entrap.

Next him was Fear, all arm'd from top to toe,
Yet thought himselfe not safe enough thereby,
But fear'd each shadow moving to and fro;
And his own arms when glittering he did spy
Or clashing heard, he fast away did fly,
As ashes pale of hue, and winged-heel'd;
And evermore on Daunger fixt his eye,
'Gainst whom he always bent a brazen shield,
Which his right hand unarmed fearfully did wield.

With him went Hope in rank, a handsome maid,
Of chearfull look and lovely to behold;
In silken samite she was light array'd,
And her fair locks were woven up in gold;
She always smil'd, and in her hand did hold
An holy-water sprinkle dipt in dew,
With which she sprinkled favours manifold
On whom she list, and did great liking shew,
Great liking unto many, but true love to few.

Next after them, the winged God himself
Came riding on a lion ravenous,
Taught to obey the menage of that elfe
That man and beast with power imperious
Subdueth to his kingdom tyrannous:
His blindfold eyes he bade awhile unbind,
That his proud spoil of that same dolorous
Fair dame he might behold in perfect kind;
Which seen, he much rejoiced in his cruel mind.

Of which full proud, himself uprearing high,
He looked round about with stern disdain,
And did survey his goodly company:
And marshalling the evil-ordered train,
With that the darts which his right hand did strain,
Full dreadfully he shook, that all did quake,
And clapt on high his colour'd winges twain,
That all his many it afraid did make:
Tho, blinding him again, his way he forth did take.'

The description of Hope, in this series of historical portraits, is one of the most beautiful in Spenser: and the triumph of Cupid at the mischief he has made, is worthy of the malicious urchin deity. In

reading these descriptions, one can hardly avoid being reminded of Rubens's allegorical pictures; but the account of Satyrane taming the lion's whelps and lugging the bear's cubs along in his arms while yet an infant, whom his mother so naturally advises to 'go seek some other play-fellows,' has even more of this high picturesque character. Nobody but Rubens could have painted the fancy of Spenser; and he could not have given the sentiment, the airy dream that hovers over it!

With all this, Spenser neither makes us laugh nor weep. The only jest in his poem is an allegorical play upon words, where he describes Malbecco as escaping in the herd of goats, 'by the help of his fayre hornes on hight.' But he has been unjustly charged with a want of passion and of strength. He has both in an immense degree. He has not indeed the pathos of immediate action or suffering, which is more properly the dramatic; but he has all the pathos of sentiment and romance—all that belongs to distant objects of terror, and uncertain, imaginary distress. His strength, in like manner, is not strength of will or action, of bone and muscle, nor is it coarse and palpable—but it assumes a character of vastness and sublimity seen through the same visionary medium, and blended with the appalling associations of preternatural agency. We need only turn, in proof of this, to the Cave of Despair, or the Cave of Mammon, or to the account of the change of Malbecco into Jealousy. The following stanzas, in the description of the Cave of Mammon, the grisly house of Plutus, are unrivalled for the portentous massiness of the forms, the splendid chiaro-scuro, and shadowy horror.

'That house's form within was rude and strong,
Like an huge cave hewn out of rocky clift,
From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hung,
Embossed with massy gold of glorious gift,
And with rich metal loaded every rift,
That heavy ruin they did seem to threat:
And over them Arachne high did lift
Her cunning web, and spread her subtle net,
Enwrapped in foul smoke, and clouds more black than jet.

Both roof and floor, and walls were all of gold,
But overgrown with dust and old decay,[1]
And hid in darkness that none could behold

[1] 'That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
Tho' they are made and moulded of things past,
And give to Dust, that is a little gilt,
More laud than gold o'er-dusted.'
Troilus and Cressida.

The hue thereof: for view of cheerful day
Did never in that house itself display,
But a faint shadow of uncertain light;
Such as a lamp whose life doth fade away;
Or as the moon clothed with cloudy night
Does shew to him that walks in fear and sad affright.

* * * * * * *

And over all sad Horror with grim hue
Did always soar, beating his iron wings;
And after him owls and night-ravens flew,
The hateful messengers of heavy things,
Of death and dolour telling sad tidings;
Whiles sad Celleno, sitting on a clift,
A song of bitter bale and sorrow sings,
That heart of flint asunder could have rift;
Which having ended, after him she flieth swift.'

The Cave of Despair is described with equal gloominess and power of fancy; and the fine moral declamation of the owner of it, on the evils of life, almost makes one in love with death. In the story of Malbecco, who is haunted by jealousy, and in vain strives to run away from his own thoughts—

'High over hill and over dale he flies'—

the truth of human passion and the preternatural ending are equally striking.—It is not fair to compare Spenser with Shakspeare, in point of interest. A fairer comparison would be with Comus; and the result would not be unfavourable to Spenser. There is only one work of the same allegorical kind, which has more interest than Spenser (with scarcely less imagination): and that is the Pilgrim's Progress. The three first books of the Faery Queen are very superior to the three last. One would think that Pope, who used to ask if any one had ever read the Faery Queen through, had only dipped into these last. The only things in them equal to the former, are the account of Talus, the Iron Man, and the delightful episode of Pastorella.

The language of Spenser is full, and copious, to overflowing: it is less pure and idiomatic than Chaucer's, and is enriched and adorned with phrases borrowed from the different languages of Europe, both ancient and modern. He was, probably, seduced into a certain license of expression by the difficulty of filling up the moulds of his complicated rhymed stanza from the limited resources of his native language. This stanza, with alternate and repeatedly recurring rhymes, is borrowed from the Italians. It was peculiarly fitted to

their language, which abounds in similar vowel terminations, and is as little adapted to ours, from the stubborn, unaccommodating resistance which the consonant endings of the northern languages make to this sort of endless sing-song.—Not that I would, on that account, part with the stanza of Spenser. We are, perhaps, indebted to this very necessity of finding out new forms of expression, and to the occasional faults to which it led, for a poetical language rich and varied and magnificent beyond all former, and almost all later example. His versification is, at once, the most smooth and the most sounding in the language. It is a labyrinth of sweet sounds, 'in many a winding bout of linked sweetness long drawn out'—that would cloy by their very sweetness, but that the ear is constantly relieved and enchanted by their continued variety of modulation—dwelling on the pauses of the action, or flowing on in a fuller tide of harmony with the movement of the sentiment. It has not the bold dramatic transitions of Shakspeare's blank verse, nor the high-raised tone of Milton's; but it is the perfection of melting harmony, dissolving the soul in pleasure, or holding it captive in the chains of suspense. Spenser was the poet of our waking dreams; and he has invented not only a language, but a music of his own for them. The undulations are infinite, like those of the waves of the sea: but the effect is still the same, lulling the senses into a deep oblivion of the jarring noises of the world, from which we have no wish to be ever recalled.

LECTURE III

ON SHAKSPEARE AND MILTON

In looking back to the great works of genius in former times, we are sometimes disposed to wonder at the little progress which has since been made in poetry, and in the arts of imitation in general. But this is perhaps a foolish wonder. Nothing can be more contrary to the fact, than the supposition that in what we understand by the *fine arts*, as painting, and poetry, relative perfection is only the result of repeated efforts in successive periods, and that what has been once well done, constantly leads to something better. What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration, is progressive, and admits of gradual improvement: what is not mechanical, or definite, but depends on feeling, taste, and genius, very soon becomes stationary, or retrograde, and loses more than it gains by transfusion. The contrary opinion is a vulgar error, which has grown up, like many

others, from transferring an analogy of one kind to something quite distinct, without taking into the account the difference in the nature of the things, or attending to the difference of the results. For most persons, finding what wonderful advances have been made in biblical criticism, in chemistry, in mechanics, in geometry, astronomy, &c. *i.e.* in things depending on mere inquiry and experiment, or on absolute demonstration, have been led hastily to conclude, that there was a general tendency in the efforts of the human intellect to improve by repetition, and, in all other arts and institutions, to grow perfect and mature by time. We look back upon the theological creed of our ancestors, and their discoveries in natural philosophy, with a smile of pity: science, and the arts connected with it, have all had their infancy, their youth, and manhood, and seem to contain in them no principle of limitation or decay: and, inquiring no farther about the matter, we infer, in the intoxication of our pride, and the height of our self-congratulation, that the same progress has been made, and will continue to be made, in all other things which are the work of man. The fact, however, stares us so plainly in the face, that one would think the smallest reflection must suggest the truth, and overturn our sanguine theories. The greatest poets, the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw, appeared soon after the birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society which was, in other respects, comparatively barbarous. Those arts, which depend on individual genius and incommunicable power, have always leaped at once from infancy to manhood, from the first rude dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have in general declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of each, of science and of art:—of the one, never to attain its utmost limit of perfection; and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Dante, and Ariosto, (Milton alone was of a later age, and not the worse for it)—Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccaccio, the Greek sculptors and tragedians,—all lived near the beginning of their arts—perfected, and all but created them. These giant-sons of genius stand indeed upon the earth, but they tower above their fellows; and the long line of their successors, in different ages, does not interpose any object to obstruct their view, or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature they are unrivalled; in grace and beauty they have not been surpassed. In after-ages, and more refined periods, (as they are called) great men have arisen, one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals; though in general the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order; as Tasso and Pope, among poets; Guido and Vandyke, among painters. But

in the earlier stages of the arts, as soon as the first mechanical difficulties had been got over, and the language was sufficiently acquired, they rose by clusters, and in constellations, never so to rise again!

The arts of painting and poetry are conversant with the world of thought within us, and with the world of sense around us—with what we know, and see, and feel intimately. They flow from the sacred shrine of our own breasts, and are kindled at the living lamp of nature. But the pulse of the passions assuredly beat as high, the depths and soundings of the human heart were as well understood three thousand, or three hundred years ago, as they are at present: the face of nature, and 'the human face divine' shone as bright then as they have ever done. But it is *their* light, reflected by true genius on art, that marks out its path before it, and sheds a glory round the Muses' feet, like that which

> 'Circled Una's angel face,
> And made a sunshine in the shady place.'

The four greatest names in English poetry, are almost the four first we come to—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton. There are no others that can really be put in competition with these. The two last have had justice done them by the voice of common fame. Their names are blazoned in the very firmament of reputation; while the two first (though 'the fault has been more in their stars than in themselves that they are underlings') either never emerged far above the horizon, or were too soon involved in the obscurity of time. The three first of these are excluded from Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets (Shakspeare indeed is so from the dramatic form of his compositions): and the fourth, Milton, is admitted with a reluctant and churlish welcome.

In comparing these four writers together, it might be said that Chaucer excels as the poet of manners, or of real life; Spenser, as the poet of romance; Shakspeare as the poet of nature (in the largest use of the term); and Milton, as the poet of morality. Chaucer most frequently describes things as they are; Spenser, as we wish them to be; Shakspeare, as they would be; and Milton as they ought to be. As poets, and as great poets, imagination, that is, the power of feigning things according to nature, was common to them all: but the principle or moving power, to which this faculty was most subservient in Chaucer, was habit, or inveterate prejudice; in Spenser, novelty, and the love of the marvellous; in Shakspeare, it was the force of passion, combined with every variety of possible circumstances; and in Milton, only with the highest. The characteristic of Chaucer is intensity; of Spenser, remoteness; of Milton,

elevation; of Shakspeare, every thing.—It has been said by some critic, that Shakspeare was distinguished from the other dramatic writers of his day only by his wit; that they had all his other qualities but that; that one writer had as much sense, another as much fancy, another as much knowledge of character, another the same depth of passion, and another as great a power of language. This statement is not true; nor is the inference from it well-founded, even if it were. This person does not seem to have been aware that, upon his own shewing, the great distinction of Shakspeare's genius was its virtually including the genius of all the great men of his age, and not his differing from them in one accidental particular. But to have done with such minute and literal trifling.

The striking peculiarity of Shakspeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds—so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one peculiar bias, or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. He had 'a mind reflecting ages past,' and present:—all the people that ever lived are there. There was no respect of persons with him. His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar: 'All corners of the earth, kings, queens, and states, maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave,' are hardly hid from his searching glance. He was like the genius of humanity, changing places with all of us at pleasure, and playing with our purposes as with his own. He turned the globe round for his amusement, and surveyed the generations of men, and the individuals as they passed, with their different concerns, passions, follies, vices, virtues, actions, and motives—as well those that they knew, as those which they did not know, or acknowledge to themselves. The dreams of childhood, the ravings of despair, were the toys of his fancy. Airy beings waited at his call, and came at his bidding. Harmless fairies 'nodded to him, and did him curtesies': and the night-hag bestrode the blast at the command of 'his so potent art.' The world of spirits lay open to him, like the world of real men and women: and there is the same truth in his delineations of the one as of the other; for if the preternatural characters he describes could be supposed to exist, they would speak, and feel, and act, as he makes

them. He had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it. When he conceived of a character, whether real or imaginary, he not only entered into all its thoughts and feelings, but seemed instantly, and as if by touching a secret spring, to be surrounded with all the same objects, 'subject to the same skyey influences,' the same local, outward, and unforeseen accidents which would occur in reality. Thus the character of Caliban not only stands before us with a language and manners of its own, but the scenery and situation of the enchanted island he inhabits, the traditions of the place, its strange noises, its hidden recesses, 'his frequent haunts and ancient neighbourhood,' are given with a miraculous truth of nature, and with all the familiarity of an old recollection. The whole 'coheres semblably together' in time, place, and circumstance. In reading this author, you do not merely learn what his characters say,—you see their persons. By something expressed or understood, you are at no loss to decypher their peculiar physiognomy, the meaning of a look, the grouping, the bye-play, as we might see it on the stage. A word, an epithet paints a whole scene, or throws us back whole years in the history of the person represented. So (as it has been ingeniously remarked) when Prospero describes himself as left alone in the boat with his daughter, the epithet which he applies to her, 'Me and thy *crying* self,' flings the imagination instantly back from the grown woman to the helpless condition of infancy, and places the first and most trying scene of his misfortunes before us, with all that he must have suffered in the interval. How well the silent anguish of Macduff is conveyed to the reader, by the friendly expostulation of Malcolm—'What! man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows!' Again, Hamlet, in the scene with Rosencrans and Guildenstern, somewhat abruptly concludes his fine soliloquy on life by saying, 'Man delights not me, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.' Which is explained by their answer—'My lord, we had no such stuff in our thoughts. But we smiled to think, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you, whom we met on the way':—as if while Hamlet was making this speech, his two old schoolfellows from Wittenberg had been really standing by, and he had seen them smiling by stealth, at the idea of the players crossing their minds. It is not 'a combination and a form' of words, a set speech or two, a preconcerted theory of a character, that will do this: but all the persons concerned must have been present in the poet's imagination, as at a kind of rehearsal; and whatever would have passed through their minds on the occasion, and have been observed by others, passed through his, and is made known to the

reader.—I may add in passing, that Shakspeare always gives the best directions for the costume and carriage of his heroes. Thus to take one example, Ophelia gives the following account of Hamlet; and as Ophelia had seen Hamlet, I should think her word ought to be taken against that of any modern authority.

'*Ophelia.* My lord, as I was reading in my closet,
Prince Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings loose,
Ungartred, and down-gyved to his ancle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous,
As if he had been sent from hell
To speak of horrors, thus he comes before me.
Polonius. Mad for thy love!
Oph. My lord, I do not know,
But truly I do fear it.
Pol. What said he?
Oph. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face,
As he would draw it: long staid he so;
At last, a little shaking of my arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound,
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk,
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out of doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.'

Act. II. Scene 1.

How after this airy, fantastic idea of irregular grace and bewildered melancholy any one can play Hamlet, as we have seen it played, with strut, and stare, and antic right-angled sharp-pointed gestures, it is difficult to say, unless it be that Hamlet is not bound, by the prompter's cue, to study the part of Ophelia. The account of Ophelia's death begins thus:

'There is a willow hanging o'er a brook,
That shows its hoary leaves in the glassy stream.'—

Now this is an instance of the same unconscious power of mind which is as true to nature as itself. The leaves of the willow are, in fact, white underneath, and it is this part of them which would appear

'hoary' in the reflection in the brook. The same sort of intuitive power, the same faculty of bringing every object in nature, whether present or absent, before the mind's eye, is observable in the speech of Cleopatra, when conjecturing what were the employments of Antony in his absence:—'He's speaking now, or murmuring, where's my serpent of old Nile?' How fine to make Cleopatra have this consciousness of her own character, and to make her feel that it is this for which Antony is in love with her! She says, after the battle of Actium, when Antony has resolved to risk another fight, 'It is my birth-day; I had thought to have held it poor: but since my lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra.' What other poet would have thought of such a casual resource of the imagination, or would have dared to avail himself of it? The thing happens in the play as it might have happened in fact.—That which, perhaps, more than any thing else distinguishes the dramatic productions of Shakspeare from all others, is this wonderful truth and individuality of conception. Each of his characters is as much itself, and as absolutely independent of the rest, as well as of the author, as if they were living persons, not fictions of the mind. The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given. His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors. One might suppose that he had stood by at the time, and overheard what passed. As in our dreams we hold conversations with ourselves, make remarks, or communicate intelligence, and have no idea of the answer which we shall receive, and which we ourselves make, till we hear it: so the dialogues in Shakspeare are carried on without any consciousness of what is to follow, without any appearance of preparation or premeditation. The gusts of passion come and go like sounds of music borne on the wind. Nothing is made out by formal inference and analogy, by climax and antithesis: all comes, or seems to come, immediately from nature. Each object and circumstance exists in his mind, as it would have existed in reality: each several train of thought and feeling goes on of itself, without confusion or effort. In the world of his imagination, every thing has a life, a place, and being of its own!

Chaucer's characters are sufficiently distinct from one another, but they are too little varied in themselves, too much like identical propositions. They are consistent, but uniform; we get no new idea of

them from first to last; they are not placed in different lights, nor are their subordinate *traits* brought out in new situations; they are like portraits or physiognomical studies, with the distinguishing features marked with inconceivable truth and precision, but that preserve the same unaltered air and attitude. Shakspeare's are historical figures, equally true and correct, but put into action, where every nerve and muscle is displayed in the struggle with others, with all the effect of collision and contrast, with every variety of light and shade. Chaucer's characters are narrative, Shakspeare's dramatic, Milton's epic. That is, Chaucer told only as much of his story as he pleased, as was required for a particular purpose. He answered for his characters himself. In Shakspeare they are introduced upon the stage, are liable to be asked all sorts of questions, and are forced to answer for themselves. In Chaucer we perceive a fixed essence of character. In Shakspeare there is a continual composition and decomposition of its elements, a fermentation of every particle in the whole mass, by its alternate affinity or antipathy to other principles which are brought in contact with it. Till the experiment is tried, we do not know the result, the turn which the character will take in its new circumstances. Milton took only a few simple principles of character, and raised them to the utmost conceivable grandeur, and refined them from every base alloy. His imagination, 'nigh sphered in Heaven,' claimed kindred only with what he saw from that height, and could raise to the same elevation with itself. He sat retired and kept his state alone, 'playing with wisdom'; while Shakspeare mingled with the crowd, and played the host, 'to make society the sweeter welcome.'

The passion in Shakspeare is of the same nature as his delineation of character. It is not some one habitual feeling or sentiment preying upon itself, growing out of itself, and moulding every thing to itself; it is passion modified by passion, by all the other feelings to which the individual is liable, and to which others are liable with him; subject to all the fluctuations of caprice and accident; calling into play all the resources of the understanding and all the energies of the will; irritated by obstacles or yielding to them; rising from small beginnings to its utmost height; now drunk with hope, now stung to madness, now sunk in despair, now blown to air with a breath, now raging like a torrent. The human soul is made the sport of fortune, the prey of adversity: it is stretched on the wheel of destiny, in restless ecstacy. The passions are in a state of projection. Years are melted down to moments, and every instant teems with fate. We know the results, we see the process. Thus after Iago has been boasting to himself of the effect of his poisonous

suggestions on the mind of Othello, 'which, with a little act upon the blood, will work like mines of sulphur,' he adds—

> 'Look where he comes! not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the East,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday.'—

And he enters at this moment, like the crested serpent, crowned with his wrongs and raging for revenge! The whole depends upon the turn of a thought. A word, a look, blows the spark of jealousy into a flame; and the explosion is immediate and terrible as a volcano. The dialogues in Lear, in Macbeth, that between Brutus and Cassius, and nearly all those in Shakspeare, where the interest is wrought up to its highest pitch, afford examples of this dramatic fluctuation of passion. The interest in Chaucer is quite different; it is like the course of a river, strong, and full, and increasing. In Shakspeare, on the contrary, it is like the sea, agitated this way and that, and loud-lashed by furious storms; while in the still pauses of the blast, we distinguish only the cries of despair, or the silence of death! Milton, on the other hand, takes the imaginative part of passion—that which remains after the event, which the mind reposes on when all is over, which looks upon circumstances from the remotest elevation of thought and fancy, and abstracts them from the world of action to that of contemplation. The objects of dramatic poetry affect us by sympathy, by their nearness to ourselves, as they take us by surprise, or force us upon action, 'while rage with rage doth sympathise'; the objects of epic poetry affect us through the medium of the imagination, by magnitude and distance, by their permanence and universality. The one fill us with terror and pity, the other with admiration and delight. There are certain objects that strike the imagination, and inspire awe in the very idea of them, independently of any dramatic interest, that is, of any connection with the vicissitudes of human life. For instance, we cannot think of the pyramids of Egypt, of a Gothic ruin, or an old Roman encampment, without a certain emotion, a sense of power and sublimity coming over the mind. The heavenly bodies that hung over our heads wherever we go, and 'in their untroubled element shall shine when we are laid in dust, and all our cares forgotten,' affect us in the same way. Thus Satan's address to the Sun has an epic, not a dramatic interest; for though the second person in the dialogue makes no answer and feels no concern, yet the eye of that vast luminary is upon him, like the eye of heaven, and seems conscious of what he says, like an universal presence. Dramatic poetry and epic, in their perfection, indeed, approximate to and

strengthen one another. Dramatic poetry borrows aid from the dignity of persons and things, as the heroic does from human passion, but in theory they are distinct.—When Richard II. calls for the looking-glass to contemplate his faded majesty in it, and bursts into that affecting exclamation: 'Oh, that I were a mockery-king of snow, to melt away before the sun of Bolingbroke,' we have here the utmost force of human passion, combined with the ideas of regal splendour and fallen power. When Milton says of Satan:

> '—— His form had not yet lost
> All her original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
> Of glory obscur'd;'—

the mixture of beauty, of grandeur, and pathos, from the sense of irreparable loss, of never-ending, unavailing regret, is perfect.

The great fault of a modern school of poetry is, that it is an experiment to reduce poetry to a mere effusion of natural sensibility; or what is worse, to divest it both of imaginary splendour and human passion, to surround the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writers' own minds. Milton and Shakspeare did not so understand poetry. They gave a more liberal interpretation both to nature and art. They did not do all they could to get rid of the one and the other, to fill up the dreary void with the Moods of their own Minds. They owe their power over the human mind to their having had a deeper sense than others of what was grand in the objects of nature, or affecting in the events of human life. But to the men I speak of there is nothing interesting, nothing heroical, but themselves. To them the fall of gods or of great men is the same. They do not enter into the feeling. They cannot understand the terms. They are even debarred from the last poor, paltry consolation of an unmanly triumph over fallen greatness; for their minds reject, with a convulsive effort and intolerable loathing, the very idea that there ever was, or was thought to be, any thing superior to themselves. All that has ever excited the attention or admiration of the world, they look upon with the most perfect indifference; and they are surprised to find that the world repays their indifference with scorn. 'With what measure they mete, it has been meted to them again.'—

Shakespeare's imagination is of the same plastic kind as his conception of character or passion. 'It glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.' Its movement is rapid and devious. It unites the most opposite extremes; or, as Puck says, in boasting of his own feats, 'puts a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes.'

He seems always hurrying from his subject, even while describing it; but the stroke, like the lightning's, is sure as it is sudden. He takes the widest possible range, but from that very range he has his choice of the greatest variety and aptitude of materials. He brings together images the most alike, but placed at the greatest distance from each other; that is, found in circumstances of the greatest dissimilitude. From the remoteness of his combinations, and the celerity with which they are effected, they coalesce the more indissolubly together. The more the thoughts are strangers to each other, and the longer they have been kept asunder, the more intimate does their union seem to become. Their felicity is equal to their force. Their likeness is made more dazzling by their novelty. They startle, and take the fancy prisoner in the same instant. I will mention one or two which are very striking, and not much known, out of Troilus and Cressida. Æneas says to Agamemnon,

> 'I ask that I may waken reverence,
> And on the cheek be ready with a blush
> Modest as morning, when she coldly eyes
> The youthful Phœbus.'

Ulysses urging Achilles to shew himself in the field, says—

> 'No man is the lord of anything,
> Till he communicate his parts to others:
> Nor doth he of himself know them for aught,
> Till he behold them formed in the applause,
> Where they 're extended! which like an arch reverberates
> The voice again, or like a gate of steel,
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> Its figure and its heat.'

Patroclus gives the indolent warrior the same advice.

> 'Rouse yourself; and the weak wanton Cupid
> Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,
> And like a dew-drop from the lion's mane
> Be shook to air.'

Shakspeare's language and versification are like the rest of him. He has a magic power over words: they come winged at his bidding; and seem to know their places. They are struck out at a heat, on the spur of the occasion, and have all the truth and vividness which arise from an actual impression of the objects. His epithets and single phrases are like sparkles, thrown off from an imagination, fired by the whirling rapidity of its own motion. His language is

hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images. It abounds in sudden transitions and elliptical expressions. This is the source of his mixed metaphors, which are only abbreviated forms of speech. These, however, give no pain from long custom. They have, in fact, become idioms in the language. They are the building, and not the scaffolding to thought. We take the meaning and effect of a well-known passage entire, and no more stop to scan and spell out the particular words and phrases, than the syllables of which they are composed. In trying to recollect any other author, one sometimes stumbles, in case of failure, on a word as good. In Shakspeare, any other word but the true one, is sure to be wrong. If any body, for instance, could not recollect the words of the following description,

'—— Light thickens,
And the crow makes wing to the rooky wood,'

he would be greatly at a loss to substitute others for them equally expressive of the feeling. These remarks, however, are strictly applicable only to the impassioned parts of Shakspeare's language, which flowed from the warmth and originality of his imagination, and were his own. The language used for prose conversation and ordinary business is sometimes technical, and involved in the affectation of the time. Compare, for example, Othello's apology to the senate, relating 'his whole course of love,' with some of the preceding parts relating to his appointment, and the official dispatches from Cyprus. In this respect, 'the business of the state does him offence.' His versification is no less powerful, sweet, and varied. It has every occasional excellence, of sullen intricacy, crabbed and perplexed, or of the smoothest and loftiest expansion—from the ease and familiarity of measured conversation to the lyrical sounds

'——Of ditties highly penned,
Sung by a fair queen in a summer's bower,
With ravishing division to her lute.'

It is the only blank verse in the language, except Milton's, that for itself is readable. It is not stately and uniformly swelling like his, but varied and broken by the inequalities of the ground it has to pass over in its uncertain course,

'And so by many winding nooks it strays,
With willing sport to the wild ocean.'

It remains to speak of the faults of Shakspeare. They are not so many or so great as they have been represented; what there are, are chiefly owing to the following causes:—The universality of his genius

was, perhaps, a disadvantage to his single works; the variety of his resources, sometimes diverting him from applying them to the most effectual purposes. He might be said to combine the powers of Æschylus and Aristophanes, of Dante and Rabelais, in his own mind. If he had been only half what he was, he would perhaps have appeared greater. The natural ease and indifference of his temper made him sometimes less scrupulous than he might have been. He is relaxed and careless in critical places; he is in earnest throughout only in Timon, Macbeth, and Lear. Again, he had no models of acknowledged excellence constantly in view to stimulate his efforts, and by all that appears, no love of fame. He wrote for the 'great vulgar and the small,' in his time, not for posterity. If Queen Elizabeth and the maids of honour laughed heartily at his worst jokes, and the catcalls in the gallery were silent at his best passages, he went home satisfied, and slept the next night well. He did not trouble himself about Voltaire's criticisms. He was willing to take advantage of the ignorance of the age in many things; and if his plays pleased others, not to quarrel with them himself. His very facility of production would make him set less value on his own excellences, and not care to distinguish nicely between what he did well or ill. His blunders in chronology and geography do not amount to above half a dozen, and they are offences against chronology and geography, not against poetry. As to the unities, he was right in setting them at defiance. He was fonder of puns than became so great a man. His barbarisms were those of his age. His genius was his own. He had no objection to float down with the stream of common taste and opinion: he rose above it by his own buoyancy, and an impulse which he could not keep under, in spite of himself or others, and 'his delights did shew most dolphin-like.'

He had an equal genius for comedy and tragedy; and his tragedies are better than his comedies, because tragedy is better than comedy. His female characters, which have been found fault with as insipid, are the finest in the world. Lastly, Shakspeare was the least of a coxcomb of any one that ever lived, and much of a gentleman.

Shakspeare discovers in his writings little religious enthusiasm, and an indifference to personal reputation; he had none of the bigotry of his age, and his political prejudices were not very strong. In these respects, as well as in every other, he formed a direct contrast to Milton. Milton's works are a perpetual invocation to the Muses; a hymn to Fame. He had his thoughts constantly fixed on the contemplation of the Hebrew theocracy, and of a perfect commonwealth; and he seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark of faith. His religious zeal infused its character into his im-

agination; so that he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius, as he did to the exercise of virtue, or the good of his country. The spirit of the poet, the patriot, and the prophet, vied with each other in his breast. His mind appears to have held equal communion with the inspired writers, and with the bards and sages of ancient Greece and Rome;—

> 'Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old.'

He had a high standard, with which he was always comparing himself, nothing short of which could satisfy his jealous ambition. He thought of nobler forms and nobler things than those he found about him. He lived apart, in the solitude of his own thoughts, carefully excluding from his mind whatever might distract its purposes or alloy its purity, or damp its zeal. 'With darkness and with dangers compassed round,' he had the mighty models of antiquity always present to his thoughts, and determined to raise a monument of equal height and glory, 'piling up every stone of lustre from the brook,' for the delight and wonder of posterity. He had girded himself up, and as it were, sanctified his genius to this service from his youth. 'For after,' he says, 'I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father, been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences as my age could suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, it was found that whether aught was imposed upon me by them, or betaken to of my own choice, the style by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live; but much latelier, in the private academies of Italy, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout, met with acceptance above what was looked for; I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labour and intense study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after-times as they should not willingly let it die. The accomplishment of these intentions, which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that none hath by more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, that I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and free leisure will extend. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet, I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours

of wine; like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs. Although it nothing content me to have disclosed thus much beforehand; but that I trust hereby to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies.'

So that of Spenser:

> 'The noble heart that harbours virtuous thought,
> And is with child of glorious great intent,
> Can never rest until it forth have brought
> The eternal brood of glory excellent.'

Milton, therefore, did not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a resolution to leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost: he surrounds it with every possible association of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, intellectual, or physical. He refines on his descriptions of beauty; loading sweets on sweets, till the sense aches at them; and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that 'makes Ossa like a wart.' In Milton, there is always an appearance of effort: in Shakespeare, scarcely any.

Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. He is a writer of centos, and yet in originality scarcely inferior to Homer. The power of his mind is stamped on every line. The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials. In reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them. The quantity of art in him shews the strength of his genius: the weight of his intellectual obligations would have oppressed any other writer. Milton's learning has the

effect of intuition. He describes objects, of which he could only have read in books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature. He makes words tell as pictures.

> 'Him followed Rimmon, whose delightful seat
> Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
> Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.'

The word *lucid* here gives to the idea all the sparkling effect of the most perfect landscape.

And again:

> 'As when a vulture on Imaus bred,
> Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
> Dislodging from a region scarce of prey,
> To gorge the flesh of lambs and yeanling kids
> On hills where flocks are fed, flies towards the springs
> Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
> But in his way lights on the barren plains
> Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
> With sails and wind their cany waggons light.'

If Milton had taken a journey for the express purpose, he could not have described this scenery and mode of life better. Such passages are like demonstrations of natural history. Instances might be multiplied without end.

We might be tempted to suppose that the vividness with which he describes visible objects, was owing to their having acquired an unusual degree of strength in his mind, after the privation of his sight; but we find the same palpableness and truth in the descriptions which occur in his early poems. In Lycidas he speaks of 'the great vision of the guarded mount,' with that preternatural weight of impression with which it would present itself suddenly to 'the pilot of some small night-foundered skiff': and the lines in the Penseroso, describing 'the wandering moon,'

> 'Riding near her highest noon,
> Like one that had been led astray
> Through the heaven's wide pathless way,'

are as if he had gazed himself blind in looking at her. There is also the same depth of impression in his descriptions of the objects of all the different senses, whether colours, or sounds, or smells—the same absorption of his mind in whatever engaged his attention at the time. It has been indeed objected to Milton, by a common perversity of criticism, that his ideas were musical rather than picturesque, as if because they were in the highest degree musical, they must be (to

keep the sage critical balance even, and to allow no one man to possess two qualities at the same time) proportionably deficient in other respects. But Milton's poetry is not cast in any such narrow, common-place mould; it is not so barren of resources. His worship of the Muse was not so simple or confined. A sound arises 'like a steam of rich distilled perfumes'; we hear the pealing organ, but the incense on the altars is also there, and the statues of the gods are ranged around! The ear indeed predominates over the eye, because it is more immediately affected, and because the language of music blends more immediately with, and forms a more natural accompaniment to, the variable and indefinite associations of ideas conveyed by words. But where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. The strongest and best proof of this, as a characteristic power of his mind, is, that the persons of Adam and Eve, of Satan, &c. are always accompanied, in our imagination, with the grandeur of the naked figure; they convey to us the ideas of sculpture. As an instance, take the following:

'——— He soon
Saw within ken a glorious Angel stand,
The same whom John saw also in the sun:
His back was turned, but not his brightness hid;
Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders fledge with wings
Lay waving round; on some great charge employ'd
He seem'd, or fix'd in cogitation deep.
Glad was the spirit impure, as now in hope
To find who might direct his wand'ring flight
To Paradise, the happy seat of man,
His journey's end, and our beginning woe.
But first he casts to change his proper shape,
Which else might work him danger or delay
And now a stripling cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smiled celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd:
Under a coronet his flowing hair
In curls on either cheek play'd; wings he wore
Of many a colour'd plume sprinkled with gold,
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a silver wand.'

The figures introduced here have all the elegance and precision of a Greek statue; glossy and impurpled, tinged with golden light, and musical as the strings of Memnon's harp!

Again, nothing can be more magnificent than the portrait of Beelzebub:

> 'With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
> The weight of mightiest monarchies:'

Or the comparison of Satan, as he 'lay floating many a rood,' to 'that sea beast,'

> 'Leviathan, which God of all his works
> Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream!'

What a force of imagination is there in this last expression! What an idea it conveys of the size of that hugest of created beings, as if it shrunk up the ocean to a stream, and took up the sea in its nostrils as a very little thing? Force of style is one of Milton's greatest excellences. Hence, perhaps, he stimulates us more in the reading, and less afterwards. The way to defend Milton against all impugners, is to take down the book and read it.

Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakspeare's) that deserves the name of verse. Dr. Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the Paradise Lost as harsh and unequal. I shall not pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case; for where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted, the poet must sometimes fail. But I imagine that there are more perfect examples in Milton of musical expression, or of an adaptation of the sound and movement of the verse to the meaning of the passage, than in all our other writers, whether of rhyme or blank verse, put together, (with the exception already mentioned). Spenser is the most harmonious of our stanza writers, as Dryden is the most sounding and varied of our rhymists. But in neither is there any thing like the same ear for music, the same power of approximating the varieties of poetical to those of musical rhythm, as there is in our great epic poet. The sound of his lines is moulded into the expression of the sentiment, almost of the very image. They rise or fall, pause or hurry rapidly on, with exquisite art, but without the least trick or affectation, as the occasion seems to require.

The following are some of the finest instances:

> '——— His hand was known
> In Heaven by many a tower'd structure high;—
> Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
> In ancient Greece: and in the Ausonian land
> Men called him Mulciber: and how he fell
> From Heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove

Sheer o'er the chrystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle: thus they relate,
Erring.'—

'——— But chief the spacious hall
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flow'rs
Fly to and fro: or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
Swarm'd and were straiten'd; till the signal giv'n,
Behold a wonder! They but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.'

I can only give another instance, though I have some difficulty in leaving off.

'Round he surveys (and well might, where he stood
So high above the circling canopy
Of night's extended shade) from th' eastern point
Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
Beyond the horizon: then from pole to pole
He views in breadth, and without longer pause
Down right into the world's first region throws
His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
Through the pure marble air his oblique way
Amongst innumerable stars that shone
Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds;
Or other worlds they seem'd or happy isles,' &c.

The verse, in this exquisitely modulated passage, floats up and down

as if it had itself wings. Milton has himself given us the theory of his versification—

> 'Such as the meeting soul may pierce
> In notes with many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out.'

Dr. Johnson and Pope would have converted his vaulting Pegasus into a rocking-horse. Read any other blank verse but Milton's,—Thomson's, Young's, Cowper's, Wordsworth's,—and it will be found, from the want of the same insight into 'the hidden soul of harmony,' to be mere lumbering prose.

To proceed to a consideration of the merits of Paradise Lost, in the most essential point of view, I mean as to the poetry of character and passion. I shall say nothing of the fable, or of other technical objections or excellences; but I shall try to explain at once the foundation of the interest belonging to the poem. I am ready to give up the dialogues in Heaven, where, as Pope justly observes, 'God the Father turns a school-divine'; nor do I consider the battle of the angels as the climax of sublimity, or the most successful effort of Milton's pen. In a word, the interest of the poem arises from the daring ambition and fierce passions of Satan, and from the account of the paradisaical happiness, and the loss of it by our first parents. Three-fourths of the work are taken up with these characters, and nearly all that relates to them is unmixed sublimity and beauty. The two first books alone are like two massy pillars of solid gold.

Satan is the most heroic subject that ever was chosen for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design is lofty. He was the first of created beings, who, for endeavouring to be equal with the highest, and to divide the empire of heaven with the Almighty, was hurled down to hell. His aim was no less than the throne of the universe; his means, myriads of angelic armies bright, the third part of the heavens, whom he lured after him with his countenance, and who durst defy the Omnipotent in arms. His ambition was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but not so his despair, for his fortitude was as great as his sufferings. His strength of mind was matchless as his strength of body; the vastness of his designs did not surpass the firm, inflexible determination with which he submitted to his irreversible doom, and final loss of all good. His power of action and of suffering was equal. He was the greatest power that was ever overthrown, with the strongest will left to resist or to endure. He was baffled, not confounded. He stood like a tower; or

> '———— As when Heaven's fire
> Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines.'

He was still surrounded with hosts of rebel angels, armed warriors, who own him as their sovereign leader, and with whose fate he sympathises as he views them round, far as the eye can reach; though he keeps aloof from them in his own mind, and holds supreme counsel only with his own breast. An outcast from Heaven, Hell trembles beneath his feet, Sin and Death are at his heels, and mankind are his easy prey.

> 'All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what else is not to be overcome,'

are still his. The sense of his punishment seems lost in the magnitude of it; the fierceness of tormenting flames is qualified and made innoxious by the greater fierceness of his pride; the loss of infinite happiness to himself is compensated in thought, by the power of inflicting infinite misery on others. Yet Satan is not the principle of malignity, or of the abstract love of evil—but of the abstract love of power, of pride, of self-will personified, to which last principle all other good and evil, and even his own, are subordinate. From this principle he never once flinches. His love of power and contempt for suffering are never once relaxed from the highest pitch of intensity. His thoughts burn like a hell within him; but the power of thought holds dominion in his mind over every other consideration. The consciousness of a determined purpose, of 'that intellectual being, those thoughts that wander through eternity,' though accompanied with endless pain, he prefers to nonentity, to 'being swallowed up and lost in the wide womb of uncreated night.' He expresses the sum and substance of all ambition in one line. 'Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable, doing or suffering!' After such a conflict as his, and such a defeat, to retreat in order, to rally, to make terms, to exist at all, is something; but he does more than this—he founds a new empire in hell, and from it conquers this new world, whither he bends his undaunted flight, forcing his way through nether and surrounding fires. The poet has not in all this given us a mere shadowy outline; the strength is equal to the magnitude of the conception. The Achilles of Homer is not more distinct; the Titans were not more vast; Prometheus chained to his rock was not a more terrific example of suffering and of crime. Wherever the figure of Satan is introduced, whether he walks or flies, 'rising aloft incumbent on the dusky air,' it is illustrated with the most striking and appropriate images: so that we see it always before us, gigantic, irregular, portentous, uneasy, and disturbed—but dazzling in its faded

splendour, the clouded ruins of a god. The deformity of Satan is only in the depravity of his will; he has no bodily deformity to excite our loathing or disgust. The horns and tail are not there, poor emblems of the unbending, unconquered spirit, of the writhing agonies within. Milton was too magnanimous and open an antagonist to support his argument by the bye-tricks of a hump and cloven foot; to bring into the fair field of controversy the good old catholic prejudices of which Tasso and Dante have availed themselves, and which the mystic German critics would restore. He relied on the justice of his cause, and did not scruple to give the devil his due. Some persons may think that he has carried his liberality too far, and injured the cause he professed to espouse by making him the chief person in his poem. Considering the nature of his subject, he would be equally in danger of running into this fault, from his faith in religion, and his love of rebellion; and perhaps each of these motives had its full share in determining the choice of his subject.

Not only the figure of Satan, but his speeches in council, his soliloquies, his address to Eve, his share in the war in heaven, or in the fall of man, shew the same decided superiority of character. To give only one instance, almost the first speech he makes:

> 'Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
> Said then the lost archangel, this the seat
> That we must change for Heaven; this mournful gloom
> For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
> Who now is sov'rain can dispose and bid
> What shall be right: farthest from him is best,
> Whom reason hath equal'd, force hath made supreme
> Above his equals. Farewel happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells: Hail horrors, hail
> Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell,
> Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
> A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
> What matter where, if I be still the same,
> And what I should be, all but less than he
> Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
> We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
> Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
> Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.'

The whole of the speeches and debates in Pandemonium are well worthy of the place and the occasion—with Gods for speakers, and

angels and archangels for hearers. There is a decided manly tone in the arguments and sentiments, an eloquent dogmatism, as if each person spoke from thorough conviction; an excellence which Milton probably borrowed from his spirit of partisanship, or else his spirit of partisanship from the natural firmness and vigour of his mind. In this respect Milton resembles Dante, (the only modern writer with whom he has any thing in common) and it is remarkable that Dante, as well as Milton, was a political partisan. That approximation to the severity of impassioned prose which has been made an objection to Milton's poetry, and which is chiefly to be met with in these bitter invectives, is one of its great excellences. The author might here turn his philippics against Salmasius to good account. The rout in Heaven is like the fall of some mighty structure, nodding to its base, 'with hideous ruin and combustion down.' But, perhaps, of all the passages in Paradise Lost, the description of the employments of the angels during the absence of Satan, some of whom 'retreated in a silent valley, sing with notes angelical to many a harp their own heroic deeds and hapless fall by doom of battle,' is the most perfect example of mingled pathos and sublimity.—What proves the truth of this noble picture in every part, and that the frequent complaint of want of interest in it is the fault of the reader, not of the poet, is that when any interest of a practical kind takes a shape that can be at all turned into this, (and there is little doubt that Milton had some such in his eye in writing it,) each party converts it to its own purposes, feels the absolute identity of these abstracted and high speculations; and that, in fact, a noted political writer of the present day has exhausted nearly the whole account of Satan in the Paradise Lost, by applying it to a character whom he considered as after the devil, (though I do not know whether he would make even that exception) the greatest enemy of the human race. This may serve to shew that Milton's Satan is not a very insipid personage.

Of Adam and Eve it has been said, that the ordinary reader can feel little interest in them, because they have none of the passions, pursuits, or even relations of human life, except that of man and wife, the least interesting of all others, if not to the parties concerned, at least to the by-standers. The preference has on this account been given to Homer, who, it is said, has left very vivid and infinitely diversified pictures of all the passions and affections, public and private, incident to human nature—the relations of son, of brother, parent, friend, citizen, and many others. Longinus preferred the Iliad to the Odyssey, on account of the greater number of battles it contains; but I can neither agree to his criticism, nor assent to the present objection. It is true, there is little action in this part of

Milton's poem; but there is much repose, and more enjoyment. There are none of the every-day occurrences, contentions, disputes, wars, fightings, feuds, jealousies, trades, professions, liveries, and common handicrafts of life; 'no kind of traffic; letters are not known; no use of service, of riches, poverty, contract, succession, bourne, bound of land, tilth, vineyard none; no occupation, no treason, felony, sword, pike, knife, gun, nor need of any engine.' So much the better; thank Heaven, all these were yet to come. But still the die was cast, and in them our doom was sealed. In them

> 'The generations were prepared; the pangs,
> The internal pangs, were ready, the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will,
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.'

In their first false step we trace all our future woe, with loss of Eden. But there was a short and precious interval between, like the first blush of morning before the day is overcast with tempest, the dawn of the world, the birth of nature from 'the unapparent deep,' with its first dews and freshness on its cheek, breathing odours. Theirs was the first delicious taste of life, and on them depended all that was to come of it. In them hung trembling all our hopes and fears. They were as yet alone in the world, in the eye of nature, wondering at their new being, full of enjoyment and enraptured with one another, with the voice of their Maker walking in the garden, and ministering angels attendant on their steps, winged messengers from heaven like rosy clouds descending in their sight. Nature played around them her virgin fancies wild; and spread for them a repast where no crude surfeit reigned. Was there nothing in this scene, which God and nature alone witnessed, to interest a modern critic? What need was there of action, where the heart was full of bliss and innocence without it! They had nothing to do but feel their own happiness, and 'know to know no more.' 'They toiled not, neither did they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' All things seem to acquire fresh sweetness, and to be clothed with fresh beauty in their sight. They tasted as it were for themselves and us, of all that there ever was pure in human bliss. 'In them the burthen of the mystery, the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world, is lightened.' They stood awhile perfect, but they afterwards fell, and were driven out of Paradise, tasting the first fruits of bitterness as they had done of bliss. But their pangs were such as a pure spirit might feel at the sight —their tears 'such as angels weep.' The pathos is of that mild

contemplative kind which arises from regret for the loss of unspeakable happiness, and resignation to inevitable fate. There is none of the fierceness of intemperate passion, none of the agony of mind and turbulence of action, which is the result of the habitual struggles of the will with circumstances, irritated by repeated disappointment, and constantly setting its desires most eagerly on that which there is an impossibility of attaining. This would have destroyed the beauty of the whole picture. They had received their unlooked-for happiness as a free gift from their Creator's hands, and they submitted to its loss, not without sorrow, but without impious and stubborn repining.

'In either hand the hast'ning angel caught
Our ling'ring parents, and to th' eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain; then disappear'd.
They looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces throng'd, and fiery arms:
Some natural tears they dropt, but wip'd them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.'

LECTURE IV

ON DRYDEN AND POPE

Dryden and Pope are the great masters of the artificial style of poetry in our language, as the poets of whom I have already treated, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, were of the natural; and though this artificial style is generally and very justly acknowledged to be inferior to the other, yet those who stand at the head of that class, ought, perhaps, to rank higher than those who occupy an inferior place in a superior class. They have a clear and independent claim upon our gratitude, as having produced a kind and degree of excellence which existed equally nowhere else. What has been done well by some later writers of the highest style of poetry, is included in, and obscured by a greater degree of power and genius in those before them: what has been done best by poets of an entirely distinct turn of mind, stands by itself, and tells for its whole amount. Young, for instance, Gray, or Akenside, only follow in the train of Milton and Shakspeare: Pope and Dryden walk by their side, though of an unequal stature, and are entitled to a first place in the

lists of fame. This seems to be not only the reason of the thing, but the common sense of mankind, who, without any regular process of reflection, judge of the merit of a work, not more by its inherent and absolute worth, than by its originality and capacity of gratifying a different faculty of the mind, or a different class of readers; for it should be recollected, that there may be readers (as well as poets) not of the highest class, though very good sort of people, and not altogether to be despised.

The question, whether Pope was a poet, has hardly yet been settled, and is hardly worth settling; for if he was not a great poet, he must have been a great prose-writer, that is, he was a great writer of some sort. He was a man of exquisite faculties, and of the most refined taste; and as he chose verse (the most obvious distinction of poetry) as the vehicle to express his ideas, he has generally passed for a poet, and a good one. If, indeed, by a great poet, we mean one who gives the utmost grandeur to our conceptions of nature, or the utmost force to the passions of the heart, Pope was not in this sense a great poet; for the bent, the characteristic power of his mind, lay the clean contrary way; namely, in representing things as they appear to the indifferent observer, stripped of prejudice and passion, as in his Critical Essays; or in representing them in the most contemptible and insignificant point of view, as in his Satires; or in clothing the little with mock-dignity, as in his poems of Fancy; or in adorning the trivial incidents and familiar relations of life with the utmost elegance of expression, and all the flattering illusions of friendship or self-love, as in his Epistles. He was not then distinguished as a poet of lofty enthusiasm, of strong imagination, with a passionate sense of the beauties of nature, or a deep insight into the workings of the heart; but he was a wit, and a critic, a man of sense, of observation, and the world, with a keen relish for the elegances of art, or of nature when embellished by art, a quick tact for propriety of thought and manners as established by the forms and customs of society, a refined sympathy with the sentiments and habitudes of human life, as he felt them within the little circle of his family and friends. He was, in a word, the poet, not of nature, but of art; and the distinction between the two, as well as I can make it out, is this—The poet of nature is one who, from the elements of beauty, of power, and of passion in his own breast, sympathises with whatever is beautiful, and grand, and impassioned in nature, in its simple majesty, in its immediate appeal to the senses, to the thoughts and hearts of all men; so that the poet of nature, by the truth, and depth, and harmony of his mind, may be said to hold communion with the very soul of nature; to be identified with and to foreknow and to record the

feelings of all men at all times and places, as they are liable to the same impressions; and to exert the same power over the minds of his readers, that nature does. He sees things in their eternal beauty, for he sees them as they are; he feels them in their universal interest, for he feels them as they affect the first principles of his and our common nature. Such was Homer, such was Shakspeare, whose works will last as long as nature, because they are a copy of the indestructible forms and everlasting impulses of nature, welling out from the bosom as from a perennial spring, or stamped upon the senses by the hand of their maker. The power of the imagination in them, is the representative power of all nature. It has its centre in the human soul, and makes the circuit of the universe.

Pope was not assuredly a poet of this class, or in the first rank of it. He saw nature only dressed by art; he judged of beauty by fashion; he sought for truth in the opinions of the world; he judged of the feelings of others by his own. The capacious soul of Shakspeare had an intuitive and mighty sympathy with whatever could enter into the heart of man in all possible circumstances: Pope had an exact knowledge of all that he himself loved or hated, wished or wanted. Milton has winged his daring flight from heaven to earth, through Chaos and old Night. Pope's Muse never wandered with safety, but from his library to his grotto, or from his grotto into his library back again. His mind dwelt with greater pleasure on his own garden, than on the garden of Eden; he could describe the faultless whole-length mirror that reflected his own person, better than the smooth surface of the lake that reflects the face of heaven—a piece of cut glass or a pair of paste buckles with more brilliance and effect, than a thousand dew-drops glittering in the sun. He would be more delighted with a patent lamp, than with 'the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow,' that fills the skies with its soft silent lustre, that trembles through the cottage window, and cheers the watchful mariner on the lonely wave. In short, he was the poet of personality and of polished life. That which was nearest to him, was the greatest; the fashion of the day bore sway in his mind over the immutable laws of nature. He preferred the artificial to the natural in external objects, because he had a stronger fellow-feeling with the self-love of the maker or proprietor of a gewgaw, than admiration of that which was interesting to all mankind. He preferred the artificial to the natural in passion, because the involuntary and uncalculating impulses of the one hurried him away with a force and vehemence with which he could not grapple; while he could trifle with the conventional and superficial modifications of mere sentiment at will, laugh at or admire, put them on or off like a masquerade-dress, make much or little of them,

indulge them for a longer or a shorter time, as he pleased; and because while they amused his fancy and exercised his ingenuity, they never once disturbed his vanity, his levity, or indifference. His mind was the antithesis of strength and grandeur; its power was the power of indifference. He had none of the enthusiasm of poetry; he was in poetry what the sceptic is in religion.

It cannot be denied, that his chief excellence lay more in diminishing, than in aggrandizing objects; in checking, not in encouraging our enthusiasm; in sneering at the extravagances of fancy or passion, instead of giving a loose to them; in describing a row of pins and needles, rather than the embattled spears of Greeks and Trojans; in penning a lampoon or a compliment, and in praising Martha Blount.

Shakspeare says,

> '⸺In Fortune's ray and brightness
> The herd hath more annoyance by the brize
> Than by the tyger: but when the splitting wind
> Makes flexible the knees of knotted oaks,
> And flies fled under shade, why then
> The thing of courage,
> As roused with rage, with rage doth sympathise;
> And with an accent tuned in the self-same key,
> Replies to chiding Fortune.'

There is none of this rough work in Pope. His Muse was on a peace-establishment, and grew somewhat effeminate by long ease and indulgence. He lived in the smiles of fortune, and basked in the favour of the great. In his smooth and polished verse we meet with no prodigies of nature, but with miracles of wit; the thunders of his pen are whispered flatteries; its forked lightnings pointed sarcasms; for 'the gnarled oak,' he gives us 'the soft myrtle': for rocks, and seas, and mountains, artificial grass-plats, gravel-walks, and tinkling rills; for earthquakes and tempests, the breaking of a flower-pot, or the fall of a china jar; for the tug and war of the elements, or the deadly strife of the passions, we have

> 'Calm contemplation and poetic ease.'

Yet within this retired and narrow circle how much, and that how exquisite, was contained! What discrimination, what wit, what delicacy, what fancy, what lurking spleen, what elegance of thought, what pampered refinement of sentiment! It is like looking at the world through a microscope, where every thing assumes a new character and a new consequence, where things are seen in their

minutest circumstances and slightest shades of difference; where the little becomes gigantic, the deformed beautiful, and the beautiful deformed. The wrong end of the magnifier is, to be sure, held to every thing, but still the exhibition is highly curious, and we know not whether to be most pleased or surprised. Such, at least, is the best account I am able to give of this extraordinary man, without doing injustice to him or others. It is time to refer to particular instances in his works.—The Rape of the Lock is the best or most ingenious of these. It is the most exquisite specimen of *fillagree* work ever invented. It is admirable in proportion as it is made of nothing.

'More subtle web Arachne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched dew, do not in th' air more lightly flee.'

It is made of gauze and silver spangles. The most glittering appearance is given to every thing, to paste, pomatum, billet-doux, and patches. Airs, languid airs, breathe around;—the atmosphere is perfumed with affectation. A toilette is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the Goddess of vanity, and the history of a silver bodkin is given with all the pomp of heraldry. No pains are spared, no profusion of ornament, no splendour of poetic diction, to set off the meanest things. The balance between the concealed irony and the assumed gravity, is as nicely trimmed as the balance of power in Europe. The little is made great, and the great little. You hardly know whether to laugh or weep. It is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly. It is the perfection of the mock-heroic! I will give only the two following passages in illustration of these remarks. Can any thing be more elegant and graceful than the description of Belinda, in the beginning of the second canto?

'Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.
Fair nymphs, and well-drest youths around her shone,
But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those:
Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike;
And like the sun, they shine on all alike.

Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you 'll forget 'em all.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.'

The following is the introduction to the account of Belinda's assault upon the baron bold, who had dissevered one of these locks 'from her fair head for ever and for ever.'

'Now meet thy fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
(The same his ancient personage to deck,
Her great, great grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Form'd a vast buckle for his widow's gown:
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin grac'd her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears).'

I do not know how far Pope was indebted for the original idea, or the delightful execution of this poem, to the Lutrin of Boileau.

The Rape of the Lock is a double-refined essence of wit and fancy, as the Essay on Criticism is of wit and sense. The quantity of thought and observation in this work, for so young a man as Pope was when he wrote it, is wonderful: unless we adopt the supposition, that most men of genius spend the rest of their lives in teaching others what they themselves have learned under twenty. The conciseness and felicity of the expression are equally remarkable. Thus in reasoning on the variety of men's opinion, he says—

'Tis with our judgments, as our watches; none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.'

Nothing can be more original and happy than the general remarks and illustrations in the Essay: the critical rules laid down are too much those of a school, and of a confined one. There is one passage in the Essay on Criticism in which the author speaks with that eloquent enthusiasm of the fame of ancient writers, which those will always feel who have themselves any hope or chance of

immortality. I have quoted the passage elsewhere, but I will repeat it here.

> 'Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
> Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
> Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
> Destructive war, and all-involving age.
> Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
> Immortal heirs of universal praise!
> Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
> As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow.'

These lines come with double force and beauty on the reader, as they were dictated by the writer's despair of ever attaining that lasting glory which he celebrates with such disinterested enthusiasm in others, from the lateness of the age in which he lived, and from his writing in a tongue, not understood by other nations, and that grows obsolete and unintelligible to ourselves at the end of every second century. But he needed not have thus antedated his own poetical doom—the loss and entire oblivion of that which can never die. If he had known, he might have boasted that 'his little bark' wafted down the stream of time,

> '—— —— With *theirs* should sail,
> Pursue the triumph and partake the gale'—

if those who know how to set a due value on the blessing, were not the last to decide confidently on their own pretensions to it.

There is a cant in the present day about genius, as every thing in poetry: there was a cant in the time of Pope about sense, as performing all sorts of wonders. It was a kind of watchword, the shibboleth of a critical party of the day. As a proof of the exclusive attention which it occupied in their minds, it is remarkable that in the Essay on Criticism (not a very long poem) there are no less than half a score successive couplets rhyming to the word *sense*. This appears almost incredible without giving the instances, and no less so when they are given.

> 'But of the two, less dangerous is the offence,
> To tire our patience than mislead our sense.'—*lines* 3, 4.
>
> 'In search of wit these lose their common sense,
> And then turn critics in their own defence.'—*l.* 28, 29.
>
> 'Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
> And fills up all the mighty void of sense.'—*l.* 209, 10.
>
> 'Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
> Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense.'—*l.* 324, 5.

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence;
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.'—*l.* 364, 5.

'At every trifle scorn to take offence;
That always shews great pride, or little sense.'—*l.* 386, 7.

'Be silent always, when you doubt your sense,
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence.'—*l.* 366, 7.

'Be niggards of advice on no pretence,
For the worst avarice is that of sense.'—*l.* 578, 9.

'Strain out the last dull dropping of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence.'—*l.* 608, 9.

'Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense.'—*l.* 653, 4.

I have mentioned this the more for the sake of those critics who are bigotted idolisers of our author, chiefly on the score of his correctness. These persons seem to be of opinion that 'there is but one perfect writer, even Pope.' This is, however, a mistake: his excellence is by no means faultlessness. If he had no great faults, he is full of little errors. His grammatical construction is often lame and imperfect. In the Abelard and Eloise, he says—

'There died the best of passions, Love and Fame.'

This is not a legitimate ellipsis. Fame is not a passion, though love is: but his ear was evidently confused by the meeting of the sounds 'love and fame,' as if they of themselves immediately implied 'love, and love of fame.' Pope's rhymes are constantly defective, being rhymes to the eye instead of the ear; and this to a greater degree, not only than in later, but than in preceding writers. The praise of his versification must be confined to its uniform smoothness and harmony. In the translation of the Iliad, which has been considered as his masterpiece in style and execution, he continually changes the tenses in the same sentence for the purposes of the rhyme, which shews either a want of technical resources, or great inattention to punctilious exactness. But to have done with this.

The epistle of Eloise to Abelard is the only exception I can think of, to the general spirit of the foregoing remarks; and I should be disingenuous not to acknowledge that it is an exception. The foundation is in the letters themselves of Abelard and Eloise, which are quite as impressive, but still in a different way. It is fine as a poem: it is finer as a piece of high-wrought eloquence. No woman could be supposed to write a better love-letter in verse. Besides the richness of the historical materials, the high *gusto* of the original

sentiments which Pope had to work upon, there were perhaps circumstances in his own situation which made him enter into the subject with even more than a poet's feeling. The tears shed are drops gushing from the heart: the words are burning sighs breathed from the soul of love. Perhaps the poem to which it bears the greatest similarity in our language, is Dryden's Tancred and Sigismunda, taken from Boccaccio. Pope's Eloise will bear this comparison; and after such a test, with Boccaccio for the original author, and Dryden for the translator, it need shrink from no other. There is something exceedingly tender and beautiful in the sound of the concluding lines:

> 'If ever chance two wandering lovers brings
> To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,' &c.

The Essay on Man is not Pope's best work. It is a theory which Bolingbroke is supposed to have given him, and which he expanded into verse. But 'he spins the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.' All that he says, 'the very words, and to the self-same tune,' would prove just as well that whatever is, is *wrong*, as that whatever is, is *right*. The Dunciad has splendid passages, but in general it is dull, heavy, and mechanical. The sarcasm already quoted on Settle, the Lord Mayor's poet, (for at that time there was a city as well as a court poet)

> 'Now night descending, the proud scene is o'er,
> But lives in Settle's numbers one day more'—

is the finest inversion of immortality conceivable. It is even better than his serious apostrophe to the great heirs of glory, the triumphant bards of antiquity!

The finest burst of severe moral invective in all Pope, is the prophetical conclusion of the epilogue to the Satires:

> 'Virtue may chuse the high or low degree,
> 'Tis just alike to virtue, and to me;
> Dwell in a monk, or light upon a king,
> She 's still the same belov'd, contented thing.
> Vice is undone if she forgets her birth,
> And stoops from angels to the dregs of earth.
> But 'tis the Fall degrades her to a whore:
> Let Greatness own her, and she 's mean no more.
> Her birth, her beauty, crowds and courts confess,
> Chaste matrons praise her, and grave bishops bless;
> In golden chains the willing world she draws,
> And hers the gospel is, and hers the laws;

Mounts the tribunal, lifts her scarlet head,
And sees pale Virtue carted in her stead.
Lo! at the wheels of her triumphal car,
Old England's Genius, rough with many a scar,
Dragg'd in the dust! his arms hang idly round,
His flag inverted trains along the ground!
Our youth, all livery'd o'er with foreign gold,
Before her dance; behind her, crawl the old!
See thronging millions to the Pagod run,
And offer country, parent, wife, or son!
Hear her black trumpet through the land proclaim,
That *not to be corrupted is the shame.*
In soldier, churchman, patriot, man in pow'r,
'Tis av'rice all, ambition is no more!
See all our nobles begging to be slaves!
See all our fools aspiring to be knaves!
The wit of cheats, the courage of a whore,
Are what ten thousand envy and adore:
All, all look up with reverential awe,
At crimes that 'scape or triumph o'er the law;
While truth, worth, wisdom, daily they decry:
Nothing is sacred now but villainy.
Yet may this verse (if such a verse remain)
Show there was one who held it in disdain.'

His Satires are not in general so good as his Epistles. His enmity is effeminate and petulant from a sense of weakness, as his friendship was tender from a sense of gratitude. I do not like, for instance, his character of Chartres, or his characters of women. His delicacy often borders upon sickliness; his fastidiousness makes others fastidious. But his compliments are divine; they are equal in value to a house or an estate. Take the following. In addressing Lord Mansfield, he speaks of the grave as a scene,

'Where Murray, long enough his country's pride,
Shall be no more than Tully, or than Hyde.'

To Bolingbroke he says—

'Why rail they then if but one wreath of mine,
Oh all-accomplish'd St. John, deck thy shrine?'

Again, he has bequeathed this praise to Lord Cornbury—

'Despise low thoughts, low gains:
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains;
Be virtuous and be happy for your pains.'

One would think (though there is no knowing) that a descendant of

this nobleman, if there be such a person living, could hardly be guilty of a mean or paltry action.

The finest piece of personal satire in Pope (perhaps in the world) is his character of Addison; and this, it may be observed, is of a mixed kind, made up of his respect for the man, and a cutting sense of his failings. The other finest one is that of Buckingham, and the best part of that is the pleasurable.

> '—— Alas! how changed from him,
> That life of pleasure and that soul of whim:
> Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
> The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love!'

Among his happiest and most inimitable effusions are the Epistles to Arbuthnot, and to Jervas the painter; amiable patterns of the delightful unconcerned life, blending ease with dignity, which poets and painters then led. Thus he says to Arbuthnot—

> 'Why did I write? What sin to me unknown
> Dipp'd me in ink, my parents' or my own?
> As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.
> I left no calling for this idle trade,
> No duty broke, no father disobey'd:
> The muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife;
> To help me through this long disease, my life,
> To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,
> And teach the being you preserv'd to bear.
>
> But why then publish? Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
> Well-natur'd Garth inflam'd with early praise,
> And Congreve lov'd, and Swift endur'd my lays;
> The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read;
> E'en mitred Rochester would nod the head;
> And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
> With open arms receiv'd one poet more.
> Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!
> Happier their author, when by these belov'd!
> From these the world will judge of men and books,
> Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.'

I cannot help giving also the conclusion of the Epistle to Jervas.

> 'Oh, lasting as those colours may they shine,
> Free as thy stroke, yet faultless as thy line;
> New graces yearly like thy works display,
> Soft without weakness, without glaring gay;

Led by some rule, that guides, but not constrains;
And finish'd more through happiness than pains.
The kindred arts shall in their praise conspire,
One dip the pencil, and one string the lyre.
Yet should the Graces all thy figures place,
And breathe an air divine on ev'ry face;
Yet should the Muses bid my numbers roll
Strong as their charms, and gentle as their soul;
With Zeuxis' Helen thy Bridgewater vie,
And these be sung till Granville's Myra die:
Alas! how little from the grave we claim!
Thou but preserv'st a face, and I a name.'

And shall we cut ourselves off from beauties like these with a theory? Shall we shut up our books, and seal up our senses, to please the dull spite and inordinate vanity of those 'who have eyes, but they see not—ears, but they hear not—and understandings, but they understand not,'—and go about asking our blind guides, whether Pope was a poet or not? It will never do. Such persons, when you point out to them a fine passage in Pope, turn it off to something of the same sort in some other writer. Thus they say that the line, 'I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came,' is pretty, but taken from that of Ovid—*Et quum conabar scribere, versus erat.* They are safe in this mode of criticism: there is no danger of any one's tracing their writings to the classics.

Pope's letters and prose writings neither take away from, nor add to his poetical reputation. There is, occasionally, a littleness of manner, and an unnecessary degree of caution. He appears anxious to say a good thing in every word, as well as every sentence. They, however, give a very favourable idea of his moral character in all respects; and his letters to Atterbury, in his disgrace and exile, do equal honour to both. If I had to choose, there are one or two persons, and but one or two, that I should like to have been better than Pope!

Dryden was a better prose-writer, and a bolder and more varied versifier than Pope. He was a more vigorous thinker, a more correct and logical declaimer, and had more of what may be called strength of mind than Pope; but he had not the same refinement and delicacy of feeling. Dryden's eloquence and spirit were possessed in a higher degree by others, and in nearly the same degree by Pope himself; but that by which Pope was distinguished, was an essence which he alone possessed, and of incomparable value on that sole account. Dryden's Epistles are excellent, but inferior to Pope's, though they appear (particularly the admirable one to Congreve) to have been the model on which the latter formed his. His Satires

are better than Pope's. His Absalom and Achitophel is superior, both in force of invective and discrimination of character, to any thing of Pope's in the same way. The character of Achitophel is very fine; and breathes, if not a sincere love for virtue, a strong spirit of indignation against vice.

Mac Flecknoe is the origin of the idea of the Dunciad; but it is less elaborately constructed, less feeble, and less heavy. The difference between Pope's satirical portraits and Dryden's, appears to be this in a good measure, that Dryden seems to grapple with his antagonists, and to describe real persons; Pope seems to refine upon them in his own mind, and to make them out just what he pleases, till they are not real characters, but the mere driveling effusions of his spleen and malice. Pope describes the thing, and then goes on describing his own description till he loses himself in verbal repetitions. Dryden recurs to the object often, takes fresh sittings of nature, and gives us new strokes of character as well as of his pencil. The Hind and Panther is an allegory as well as a satire; and so far it tells less home; the battery is not so point-blank. But otherwise it has more genius, vehemence, and strength of description than any other of Dryden's works, not excepting the Absalom and Achitophel. It also contains the finest examples of varied and sounding versification. I will quote the following as an instance of what I mean. He is complaining of the treatment which the Papists, under James II. received from the church of England.

'Besides these jolly birds, whose corpse impure
Repaid their commons with their salt manure,
Another farm he had behind his house,
Not overstocked, but barely for his use;
Wherein his poor domestic poultry fed,
And from his pious hand 'received their bread.'
Our pampered pigeons, with malignant eyes,
Beheld these inmates, and their nurseries;
Though hard their fare, at evening, and at morn,
(A cruise of water, and an ear of corn,)
Yet still they grudged that *modicum*, and thought
A sheaf in every single grain was brought.
Fain would they filch that little food away,
While unrestrained those happy gluttons prey;
And much they grieved to see so nigh their hall,
The bird that warned St. Peter of his fall;
That he should raise his mitred crest on high,
And clap his wings, and call his family
To sacred rites; and vex the ethereal powers
With midnight mattins at uncivil hours;

Nay more, his quiet neighbours should molest,
Just in the sweetness of their morning rest.
Beast of a bird! supinely when he might
Lie snug and sleep, to rise before the light!
What if his dull forefathers us'd that cry,
Could he not let a bad example die?
The world was fallen into an easier way:
This age knew better than to fast and pray.
Good sense in sacred worship would appear,
So to begin as they might end the year.
Such feats in former times had wrought the falls
Of crowing chanticleers in cloister'd walls.
Expell'd for this, and for their lands they fled;
And sister Partlet with her hooded head
Was hooted hence, because she would not pray a-bed.'

There is a magnanimity of abuse in some of these epithets, a fearless choice of topics of invective, which may be considered as the heroical in satire.

The *Annus Mirabilis* is a tedious performance; it is a tissue of far-fetched, heavy, lumbering conceits, and in the worst style of what has been denominated metaphysical poetry. His Odes in general are of the same stamp; they are the hard-strained offspring of a meagre, meretricious fancy. The famous Ode on St. Cecilia deserves its reputation; for, as piece of poetical mechanism to be set to music, or recited in alternate strophe and antistrophe, with classical allusions, and flowing verse, nothing can be better. It is equally fit to be said or sung; it is not equally good to read. It is lyrical, without being epic or dramatic. For instance, the description of Bacchus,

'The jolly god in triumph comes,
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums;
Flush'd with a purple grace,
He shews his honest face'—

does not answer, as it ought, to our idea of the God, returning from the conquest of India, with satyrs and wild beasts, that he had tamed, following in his train; crowned with vine leaves, and riding in a chariot drawn by leopards—such as we have seen him painted by Titian or Rubens! Lyrical poetry, of all others, bears the nearest resemblance to painting: it deals in hieroglyphics and passing figures, which depend for effect, not on the working out, but on the selection. It is the dance and pantomime of poetry. In variety and rapidity of movement, the Alexander's Feast has all that can be required in this respect; it only wants loftiness and truth of character.

Dryden's plays are better than Pope could have written; for

though he does not go out of himself by the force of imagination, he goes out of himself by the force of common-places and rhetorical dialogue. On the other hand, they are not so good as Shakspeare's; but he has left the best character of Shakspeare that has ever been written.[1]

His alterations from Chaucer and Boccaccio shew a greater knowledge of the taste of his readers and power of pleasing them, than acquaintance with the genius of his authors. He ekes out the lameness of the verse in the former, and breaks the force of the passion in both. The Tancred and Sigismunda is the only general exception, in which, I think, he has fully retained, if not improved upon, the impassioned declamation of the original. The Honoria has none of the bewildered, dreary, preternatural effect of Boccaccio's story. Nor has the Flower and the Leaf any thing of the enchanting simplicity and concentrated feeling of Chaucer's romantic fiction. Dryden, however, sometimes seemed to indulge himself as well as his readers, as in keeping entire that noble line in Palamon's address to Venus:

'Thou gladder of the mount of Cithæron!'

His Tales have been, upon the whole, the most popular of his works; and I should think that a translation of some of the other serious tales in Boccaccio and Chaucer, as that of Isabella, the Falcon, of Constance, the Prioress's Tale, and others, if executed with taste and spirit, could not fail to succeed in the present day.

It should appear, in tracing the history of our literature, that poetry had, at the period of which we are speaking, in general declined, by successive gradations, from the poetry of imagination, in the time of Elizabeth, to the poetry of fancy (to adopt a modern distinction) in the time of Charles I.; and again from the poetry of fancy to that of wit, as in the reign of Charles II. and Queen Anne. It degenerated into the poetry of mere common places, both in style

[1] 'To begin then with Shakspeare: he was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned: he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say, he is every where alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him. No man can say, he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

Quantum lenta solent inter Viburna Cupressi.'

and thought, in the succeeding reigns: as in the latter part of the last century, it was transformed, by means of the French Revolution, into the poetry of paradox.

Of Donne I know nothing but some beautiful verses to his wife, dissuading her from accompanying him on his travels abroad, and some quaint riddles in verse, which the Sphinx could not unravel.

Waller still lives in the name of Sacharissa; and his lines on the death of Oliver Cromwell shew that he was a man not without genius and strength of thought.

Marvel is a writer of nearly the same period, and worthy of a better age. Some of his verses are harsh, as the words of Mercury; others musical, as is Apollo's lute. Of the latter kind are his boat-song, his description of a fawn, and his lines to Lady Vere. His lines prefixed to Paradise Lost are by no means the most favourable specimen of his powers.

Butler's Hudibras is a poem of more wit than any other in the language. The rhymes have as much genius in them as the thoughts; but there is no story in it, and but little humour. Humour is the making others act or talk absurdly and unconsciously: wit is the pointing out and ridiculing that absurdity consciously, and with more or less ill-nature. The fault of Butler's poem is not that it has too much wit, but that it has not an equal quantity of other things. One would suppose that the starched manners and sanctified grimace of the times in which he lived, would of themselves have been sufficiently rich in ludicrous incidents and characters; but they seem rather to have irritated his spleen, than to have drawn forth his powers of picturesque imitation. Certainly if we compare Hudibras with Don Quixote in this respect, it seems rather a meagre and unsatisfactory performance.

Rochester's poetry is the poetry of wit combined with the love of pleasure, of thought with licentiousness. His extravagant heedless levity has a sort of passionate enthusiasm in it; his contempt for every thing that others respect, almost amounts to sublimity. His poem upon Nothing is itself no trifling work. His epigrams were the bitterest, the least laboured, and the truest, that ever were written.

Sir John Suckling was of the same mercurial stamp, but with a greater fund of animal spirits; as witty, but less malicious. His Ballad on a Wedding is perfect in its kind, and has a spirit of high enjoyment in it, of sportive fancy, a liveliness of description, and a truth of nature, that never were surpassed. It is superior to either Gay or Prior; for with all their *naïveté* and terseness, it has a Shakspearian grace and luxuriance about it, which they could not have reached.

Denham and Cowley belong to the same period, but were quite distinct from each other: the one was grave and prosing, the other melancholy and fantastical. There are a number of good lines and good thoughts in the Cooper's Hill. And in Cowley there is an inexhaustible fund of sense and ingenuity, buried in inextricable conceits, and entangled in the cobwebs of the schools. He was a great man, not a great poet. But I shall say no more on this subject. I never wish to meddle with names that are sacred, unless when they stand in the way of things that are more sacred.

Withers is a name now almost forgotten, and his works seldom read; but his poetry is not unfrequently distinguished by a tender and pastoral turn of thought; and there is one passage of exquisite feeling, describing the consolations of poetry in the following terms:

'She doth tell me where to borrow
Comfort in the midst of sorrow;
Makes the desolatest place[1]
To her presence be a grace;
And the blackest discontents
Be her fairest ornaments.
In my former days of bliss
Her divine skill taught me this,
That from every thing I saw,
I could some invention draw;
And raise pleasure to her height,
Through the meanest object's sight,
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rusteling,
By a daisy whose leaves spread
Shut when Titan goes to bed;
Or a shady bush or tree,
She could more infuse in me,
Than all Nature's beauties can,
In some other wiser man.
By her help I also now
Make this churlish place allow
Some things that may sweeten gladness
In the very gall of sadness.
The dull loneness, the black shade,
That these hanging vaults have made,
The strange music of the waves,
Beating on these hollow caves,
This black den which rocks emboss,
Overgrown with eldest moss,
The rude portals that give light
More to terror than delight,

[1] Written in the Fleet Prison.

This my chamber of neglect,
Wall'd about with disrespect,
From all these and this dull air,
A fit object for despair,
She hath taught me by her might
To draw comfort and delight.
Therefore, thou best earthly bliss,
I will cherish thee for this.
Poesie; thou sweet'st content
That ere Heav'n to mortals lent:
Though they as a trifle leave thee,
Whose dull thoughts cannot conceive thee,
Though thou be to them a scorn,
That to nought but earth are born:
Let my life no longer be
Than I am in love with thee.
Though our wise ones call thee madness,
Let me never taste of sadness,
If I love not thy maddest fits,
Above all their greatest wits.
And though some too seeming holy,
Do account thy raptures folly,
Thou dost teach me to contemn
What makes knaves and fools of them.'

LECTURE V

ON THOMSON AND COWPER

Thomson, the kind-hearted Thomson, was the most indolent of mortals and of poets. But he was also one of the best both of mortals and of poets. Dr. Johnson makes it his praise that he wrote 'no line which dying he would wish to blot.' Perhaps a better proof of his honest simplicity, and inoffensive goodness of disposition, would be that he wrote no line which any other person living would wish that he should blot. Indeed, he himself wished, on his death-bed, formally to expunge his dedication of one of the Seasons to that finished courtier, and candid biographer of his own life, Bub Doddington. As critics, however, not as moralists, we might say on the other hand—'Would he had blotted a thousand!'—The same suavity of temper and sanguine warmth of feeling which threw such a natural grace and genial spirit of enthusiasm over his poetry, was also the cause of its inherent vices and defects. He is affected through carelessness: pompous from unsuspecting simplicity of

character. He is frequently pedantic and ostentatious in his style, because he had no consciousness of these vices in himself. He mounts upon stilts, not out of vanity, but indolence. He seldom writes a good line, but he makes up for it by a bad one. He takes advantage of all the most trite and mechanical common-places of imagery and diction as a kindly relief to his Muse, and as if he thought them quite as good, and likely to be quite as acceptable to the reader, as his own poetry. He did not think the difference worth putting himself to the trouble of accomplishing. He had too little art to conceal his art: or did not even seem to know that there was any occasion for it. His art is as naked and undisguised as his nature; the one is as pure and genuine as the other is gross, gaudy, and meretricious.—All that is admirable in the Seasons, is the emanation of a fine natural genius, and sincere love of his subject, unforced, unstudied, that comes uncalled for, and departs unbidden. But he takes no pains, uses no self-correction; or if he seems to labour, it is worse than labour lost. His genius 'cannot be constrained by mastery.' The feeling of nature, of the changes of the seasons, was in his mind; and he could not help conveying this feeling to the reader, by the mere force of spontaneous expression; but if the expression did not come of itself, he left the whole business to chance; or, willing to evade instead of encountering the difficulties of his subject, fills up the intervals of true inspiration with the most vapid and worthless materials, pieces out a beautiful half line with a bombastic allusion, or overloads an exquisitely natural sentiment or image with a cloud of painted, pompous, cumbrous phrases, like the shower of roses, in which he represents the Spring, his own lovely, fresh, and innocent Spring, as descending to the earth.

> 'Come, gentle Spring! ethereal Mildness! come,
> And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
> While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
> Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend.'

Who, from such a flimsy, round-about, unmeaning commencement as this, would expect the delightful, unexaggerated, home-felt descriptions of natural scenery, which are scattered in such unconscious profusion through this and the following cantos? For instance, the very next passage is crowded with a set of striking images.

> 'And see where surly Winter passes off
> Far to the north, and calls his ruffian blasts:
> His blasts obey, and quit the howling hill,
> The shatter'd forest, and the ravag'd vale;
> While softer gales succeed, at whose kind touch

ON THOMSON AND COWPER

Dissolving snows in livid torrents lost,
The mountains lift their green heads to the sky.
As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed,
And Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
Chills the pale morn, and bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless; so that scarce
The bittern knows his time with bill ingulpht
To shake the sounding marsh, or from the shore
The plovers when to scatter o'er the heath,
And sing their wild notes to the list'ning waste.'

Thomson is the best of our descriptive poets: for he gives most of the poetry of natural description. Others have been quite equal to him, or have surpassed him, as Cowper for instance, in the picturesque part of his art, in marking the peculiar features and curious details of objects;—no one has yet come up to him in giving the sum total of their effects, their varying influences on the mind. He does not go into the *minutiæ* of a landscape, but describes the vivid impression which the whole makes upon his own imagination; and thus transfers the same unbroken, unimpaired impression to the imagination of his readers. The colours with which he paints seem yet wet and breathing, like those of the living statue in the Winter's Tale. Nature in his descriptions is seen growing around us, fresh and lusty as in itself. We feel the effect of the atmosphere, its humidity or clearness, its heat or cold, the glow of summer, the gloom of winter, the tender promise of the spring, the full overshadowing foliage, the declining pomp and deepening tints of autumn. He transports us to the scorching heat of vertical suns, or plunges us into the chilling horrors and desolation of the frozen zone. We hear the snow drifting against the broken casement without, and see the fire blazing on the hearth within. The first scattered drops of a vernal shower patter on the leaves above our heads, or the coming storm resounds through the leafless groves. In a word, he describes not to the eye alone, but to the other senses, and to the whole man. He puts his heart into his subject, writes as he feels, and humanises whatever he touches. He makes all his descriptions teem with life and vivifying soul. His faults were those of his style—of the author and the man; but the original genius of the poet, the pith and marrow of his imagination, the fine natural mould in which his feelings were bedded, were too much for him to counteract by neglect, or affectation, or false ornaments. It is for this reason that he is, perhaps, the most popular of all our poets, treating of a subject that all can understand, and in a way that is interesting to all alike, to the ignorant or the refined, because he gives back the impression which the things

themselves make upon us in nature. 'That,' said a man of genius, seeing a little shabby soiled copy of Thomson's Seasons lying on the window-seat of an obscure country alehouse—'That is true fame!'

It has been supposed by some, that the Castle of Indolence is Thomson's best poem; but that is not the case. He has in it, indeed, poured out the whole soul of indolence, diffuse, relaxed, supine, dissolved into a voluptuous dream; and surrounded himself with a set of objects and companions, in entire unison with the listlessness of his own temper. Nothing can well go beyond the descriptions of these inmates of the place, and their luxurious pampered way of life—of him who came among them like 'a burnished fly in month of June,' but soon left them on his heedless way; and him,

> 'For whom the merry bells had rung, I ween,
> If in this nook of quiet, bells had ever been.'

The in-door quiet and cushioned ease, where 'all was one full-swelling bed'; the out-of-door stillness, broken only by 'the stock-dove's plaint amid the forest deep,'

> 'That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale'—

are in the most perfect and delightful keeping. But still there are no passages in this exquisite little production of sportive ease and fancy, equal to the best of those in the Seasons. Warton, in his Essay on Pope, was the first to point out and do justice to some of these; for instance, to the description of the effects of the contagion among our ships at Carthagena—'of the frequent corse heard nightly plunged amid the sullen waves,' and to the description of the pilgrims lost in the deserts of Arabia. This last passage, profound and striking as it is, is not free from those faults of style which I have already noticed.

> '———Breath'd hot
> From all the boundless furnace of the sky,
> And the wide-glitt'ring waste of burning sand,
> A suffocating wind the pilgrim smites
> With instant death. Patient of thirst and toil,
> Son of the desert, ev'n the camel feels
> Shot through his wither'd heart the fiery blast.
> Or from the black-red ether, bursting broad,
> Sallies the sudden whirlwind. Straight the sands,
> Commov'd around, in gath'ring eddies play;
> Nearer and nearer still they dark'ning come,
> Till with the gen'ral all-involving storm
> Swept up, the whole continuous wilds arise,
> And by their noon-day fount dejected thrown,

Or sunk at night in sad disastrous sleep,
Beneath descending hills the caravan
Is buried deep. In Cairo's crowded streets,
Th' impatient merchant, wond'ring, waits in vain ;
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.'

There are other passages of equal beauty with these; such as that of the hunted stag, followed by 'the inhuman rout,'

'———That from the shady depth
Expel him, circling through his ev'ry shift.
He sweeps the forest oft, and sobbing sees
The glades mild op'ning to the golden day,
Where in kind contest with his butting friends
He wont to struggle, or his loves enjoy.'

The whole of the description of the frozen zone, in the Winter, is perhaps even finer and more thoroughly felt, as being done from early associations, that that of the torrid zone in his Summer. Any thing more beautiful than the following account of the Siberian exiles is, I think, hardly to be found in the whole range of poetry.

'There through the prison of unbounded wilds,
Barr'd by the hand of nature from escape,
Wide roams the Russian exile. Nought around
Strikes his sad eye but deserts lost in snow,
And heavy-loaded groves, and solid floods,
That stretch athwart the solitary vast
Their icy horrors to the frozen main ;
And cheerless towns far distant, never bless'd,
Save when its annual course the caravan
Bends to the golden coast of rich Cathay,
With news of human kind.'

The feeling of loneliness, of distance, of lingering, slow-revolving years of pining expectation, of desolation within and without the heart, was never more finely expressed than it is here.

The account which follows of the employments of the Polar night —of the journeys of the natives by moonlight, drawn by rein-deer, and of the return of spring in Lapland—

'Where pure Niemi's fairy mountains rise,
And fring'd with roses Tenglio rolls his stream,'

is equally picturesque and striking in a different way. The traveller lost in the snow, is a well-known and admirable dramatic episode. I prefer, however, giving one example of our author's skill in painting common domestic scenery, as it will bear a more immediate comparison with the style of some later writers on such subjects. It is of

little consequence what passage we take. The following description of the first setting in of winter is, perhaps, as pleasing as any.

'Through the hush'd air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wav'ring, till at last the flakes
Fall broad and wide, and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherish'd fields
Put on their winter-robe of purest white:
'Tis brightness all, save where the new snow melts
Along the mazy current. Low the woods
Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid Sun,
Faint, from the West emits his ev'ning ray,
Earth's universal face, deep hid, and chill,
Is one wide dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. Drooping, the lab'rer-ox
Stands cover'd o'er with snow, and then demands
The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heav'n,
Tam'd by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The red-breast, sacred to the household Gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half-afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth; then hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is:
Till more familiar grown, the table-crumbs
Attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
Pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
Though timorous of heart, and hard beset
By death in various forms, dark snares and dogs,
And more unpitying men, the garden seeks,
Urg'd on by fearless want. The bleating kind
Eye the bleak heav'n, and next, the glist'ning earth,
With looks of dumb despair; then, sad dispers'd,
Dig for the wither'd herb through heaps of snow.'

It is thus that Thomson always gives a *moral sense* to nature.

Thomson's blank verse is not harsh, or utterly untuneable; but it is heavy and monotonous; it seems always labouring up-hill. The selections which have been made from his works in Enfield's Speaker, and other books of extracts, do not convey the most favourable idea of his genius or taste; such as Palemon and Lavinia, Damon and Musidora, Celadon and Amelia. Those parts of any author which are most liable to be stitched in worsted, and framed and

glazed, are not by any means always the best. The moral descriptions and reflections in the Seasons are in an admirable spirit, and written with great force and fervour.

His poem on Liberty is not equally good: his Muse was too easy and good-natured for the subject, which required as much indignation against unjust and arbitrary power, as complacency in the constitutional monarchy, under which, just after the expulsion of the Stuarts and the establishment of the House of Hanover, in contempt of the claims of hereditary pretenders to the throne, Thomson lived. Thomson was but an indifferent hater; and the most indispensable part of the love of liberty has unfortunately hitherto been the hatred of tyranny. Spleen is the soul of patriotism, and of public good: but you would not expect a man who has been seen eating peaches off a tree with both hands in his waistcoat pockets, to be 'overrun with the spleen,' or to heat himself needlessly about an abstract proposition.

His plays are liable to the same objection. They are never acted, and seldom read. The author could not, or would not, put himself out of his way, to enter into the situations and passions of others, particularly of a tragic kind. The subject of Tancred and Sigismunda, which is taken from a serious episode in Gil Blas, is an admirable one, but poorly handled: the ground may be considered as still unoccupied.

Cowper, whom I shall speak of in this connection, lived at a considerable distance of time after Thomson; and had some advantages over him, particularly in simplicity of style, in a certain precision and minuteness of graphical description, and in a more careful and leisurely choice of such topics only as his genius and peculiar habits of mind prompted him to treat of. The Task has fewer blemishes than the Seasons; but it has not the same capital excellence, the 'unbought grace' of poetry, the power of moving and infusing the warmth of the author's mind into that of the reader. If Cowper had a more polished taste, Thomson had, beyond comparison, a more fertile genius, more impulsive force, a more entire forgetfulness of himself in his subject. If in Thomson you are sometimes offended with the slovenliness of the author by profession, determined to get through his task at all events; in Cowper you are no less dissatisfied with the finicalness of the private gentleman, who does not care whether he completes his work or not; and in whatever he does, is evidently more solicitous to please himself than the public. There is an effeminacy about him, which shrinks from and repels common and hearty sympathy. With all his boasted simplicity and love of the country, he seldom launches out into general descriptions of nature: he looks at her over his clipped hedges, and from his well-swept

garden-walks; or if he makes a bolder experiment now and then, it is with an air of precaution, as if he were afraid of being caught in a shower of rain, or of not being able, in case of any untoward accident, to make good his retreat home. He shakes hands with nature with a pair of fashionable gloves on, and leads 'his Vashti' forth to public view with a look of consciousness and attention to etiquette, as a fine gentleman hands a lady out to dance a minuet. He is delicate to fastidiousness, and glad to get back, after a romantic adventure with crazy Kate, a party of gypsies or a little child on a common, to the drawing room and the ladies again, to the sofa and the tea-kettle—No, I beg his pardon, not to the singing, well-scoured tea-kettle, but to the polished and loud-hissing urn. His walks and arbours are kept clear of worms and snails, with as much an appearance of *petit-maitreship* as of humanity. He has some of the sickly sensibility and pampered refinements of Pope; but then Pope prided himself in them: whereas, Cowper affects to be all simplicity and plainness. He had neither Thomson's love of the unadorned beauties of nature, nor Pope's exquisite sense of the elegances of art. He was, in fact, a nervous man, afraid of trusting himself to the seductions of the one, and ashamed of putting forward his pretensions to an intimacy with the other: but to be a coward, is not the way to succeed either in poetry, in war, or in love! Still he is a genuine poet, and deserves all his reputation. His worst vices are amiable weaknesses, elegant trifling. Though there is a frequent dryness, timidity, and jejuneness in his manner, he has left a number of pictures of domestic comfort and social refinement, as well as of natural imagery and feeling, which can hardly be forgotten but with the language itself. Such, among others, are his memorable description of the post coming in, that of the preparations for tea in a winter's evening in the country, of the unexpected fall of snow, of the frosty morning (with the fine satirical transition to the Empress of Russia's palace of ice), and most of all, the winter's walk at noon. Every one of these may be considered as distinct studies, or highly finished cabinet-pieces, arranged without order or coherence. I shall be excused for giving the last of them, as what has always appeared to me one of the most feeling, elegant, and perfect specimens of this writer's manner.

> 'The night was winter in his roughest mood;
> The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon
> Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
> And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
> The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
> And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue,

Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale;
And through the trees I view th' embattled tow'r,
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length,
As the wind sways it, has yet well suffic'd,
And, intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppress'd.
Pleas'd with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drop of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,
And Learning wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
Have oft-times no connection. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthrall'd.
Some to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment hood-wink'd. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranc'd,
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing therefore without pause or choice
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whose rapid course
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheep-walks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes, in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that clothes the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and truth,
Not shy, as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themselves.'

His satire is also excellent. It is pointed and forcible, with the polished manners of the gentleman, and the honest indignation of the virtuous man. His religious poetry, except where it takes a tincture of controversial heat, wants elevation and fire. His Muse had not a seraph's wing. I might refer, in illustration of this opinion, to the laboured anticipation of the Millennium at the end of the sixth book. He could describe a piece of shell-work as well as any modern poet: but he could not describe the New Jerusalem so well as John Bunyan;—nor are his verses on Alexander Selkirk so good as Robinson Crusoe. The one is not so much like a vision, nor is the other so much like the reality.

The first volume of Cowper's poems has, however, been less read than it deserved. The comparison in these poems of the proud and humble believer to the peacock and the pheasant, and the parallel between Voltaire and the poor cottager, are exquisite pieces of eloquence and poetry, particularly the last.

'Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the live-long day,
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night,
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light;
She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
Has little understanding, and no wit,
Receives no praise; but, though her lot be such,
(Toilsome and indigent) she renders much;
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a treasure in the skies.

O happy peasant! Oh unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward;
He prais'd, perhaps, for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home:
He lost in errors his vain heart prefers,
She safe in the simplicity of hers.'

His character of Whitfield, in the poem on Hope, is one of his most spirited and striking things. It is written *con amore*.

'But if, unblameable in word and thought,
A man arise, a man whom God has taught,
With all Elijah's dignity of tone,
And all the love of the beloved John,
To storm the citadels they build in air,
To smite the untemper'd wall ('tis death to spare,)

To sweep away all refuges of lies,
And place, instead of quirks, themselves devise,
Lama Sabachthani before their eyes;
To show that without Christ all gain is loss,
All hope despair that stands not on his cross;
Except a few his God may have impressed,
A tenfold phrensy seizes all the rest.'

These lines were quoted, soon after their appearance, by the Monthly Reviewers, to shew that Cowper was no poet, though they afterwards took credit to themselves for having been the first to introduce his verses to the notice of the public. It is not a little remarkable that these same critics regularly damned, at its first coming out, every work which has since acquired a standard reputation with the public. —Cowper's verses on his mother's picture, and his lines to Mary, are some of the most pathetic that ever were written. His stanzas on the loss of the Royal George have a masculine strength and feeling beyond what was usual with him. The story of John Gilpin has perhaps given as much pleasure to as many people as any thing of the same length that ever was written.

His life was an unhappy one. It was embittered by a morbid affection, and by his religious sentiments. Nor are we to wonder at this, or bring it as a charge against religion; for it is the nature of the poetical temperament to carry every thing to excess, whether it be love, religion, pleasure, or pain, as we may see in the case of Cowper and of Burns, and to find torment or rapture in that in which others merely find a resource from *ennui*, or a relaxation from common occupation.

There are two poets still living who belong to the same class of excellence, and of whom I shall here say a few words; I mean Crabbe, and Robert Bloomfield, the author of the Farmer's Boy. As a painter of simple natural scenery, and of the still life of the country, few writers have more undeniable and unassuming pretensions than the ingenious and self-taught poet, last-mentioned. Among the sketches of this sort I would mention, as equally distinguished for delicacy, faithfulness, and *naïveté*, his description of lambs racing, of the pigs going out an acorning, of the boy sent to feed his sheep before the break of day in winter; and I might add the innocently told story of the poor bird-boy, who in vain through the live-long day expects his promised companions at his hut, to share his feast of roasted sloes with him, as an example of that humble pathos, in which this author excels. The fault indeed of his genius is that it is too humble: his Muse has something not only rustic, but menial in her aspect. He seems afraid of elevating

nature, lest she should be ashamed of him. Bloomfield very beautifully describes the lambs in springtime as racing round the hillocks of green turf: Thomson, in describing the same image, makes the mound of earth the remains of an old Roman encampment. Bloomfield never gets beyond his own experience; and that is somewhat confined. He gives the simple appearance of nature, but he gives it naked, shivering, and unclothed with the drapery of a moral imagination. His poetry has much the effect of the first approach of spring, 'while yet the year is unconfirmed,' where a few tender buds venture forth here and there, but are chilled by the early frosts and nipping breath of poverty.—It should seem from this and other instances that have occurred within the last century, that we cannot expect from original genius alone, without education, in modern and more artificial periods, the same bold and independent results as in former periods. And one reason appears to be, that though such persons, from whom we might at first expect a restoration of the good old times of poetry, are not encumbered and enfeebled by the trammels of custom, and the dull weight of other men's ideas; yet they are oppressed by the consciousness of a want of the common advantages which others have; are looking at the tinsel finery of the age, while they neglect the rich unexplored mine in their own breasts; and instead of setting an example for the world to follow, spend their lives in aping, or in the despair of aping, the hackneyed accomplishments of their inferiors. Another cause may be, that original genius alone is not sufficient to produce the highest excellence, without a corresponding state of manners, passions, and religious belief: that no single mind can move in direct opposition to the vast machine of the world around it; that the poet can do no more than stamp the mind of his age upon his works; and that all that the ambition of the highest genius can hope to arrive at, after the lapse of one or two generations, is the perfection of that more refined and effeminate style of studied elegance and adventitious ornament, which is the result, not of nature, but of art. In fact, no other style of poetry has succeeded, or seems likely to succeed, in the present day. The public taste hangs like a millstone round the neck of all original genius that does not conform to established and exclusive models. The writer is not only without popular sympathy, but without a rich and varied mass of materials for his mind to work upon and assimilate unconsciously to itself; his attempts at originality are looked upon as affectation, and in the end, degenerate into it from the natural spirit of contradiction, and the constant uneasy sense of disappointment and undeserved ridicule. But to return.

Crabbe is, if not the most natural, the most literal of our descriptive

poets. He exhibits the smallest circumstances of the smallest things. He gives the very costume of meanness; the nonessentials of every trifling incident. He is his own landscape-painter, and engraver too. His pastoral scenes seem pricked on paper in little dotted lines. He describes the interior of a cottage like a person sent there to distrain for rent. He has an eye to the number of arms in an old worm-eaten chair, and takes care to inform himself and the reader whether a joint-stool stands upon three legs or upon four. If a settle by the fire-side stands awry, it gives him as much disturbance as a tottering world; and he records the rent in a ragged counterpane as an event in history. He is equally curious in his back-grounds and in his figures. You know the christian and surnames of every one of his heroes,—the dates of their achievements, whether on a Sunday or a Monday,—their place of birth and burial, the colour of their clothes, and of their hair, and whether they squinted or not. He takes an inventory of the human heart exactly in the same manner as of the furniture of a sick room: his sentiments have very much the air of fixtures; he gives you the petrifaction of a sigh, and carves a tear, to the life, in stone. Almost all his characters are tired of their lives, and you heartily wish them dead. They remind one of anatomical preservations; or may be said to bear the same relation to actual life that a stuffed cat in a glass-case does to the real one purring on the hearth: the skin is the same, but the life and the sense of heat is gone. Crabbe's poetry is like a museum, or curiosity-shop: every thing has the same posthumous appearance, the same inanimateness and identity of character. If Bloomfield is too much of the Farmer's Boy, Crabbe is too much of the parish beadle, an overseer of the country poor. He has no delight beyond the walls of a workhouse, and his officious zeal would convert the world into a vast infirmary. He is a kind of Ordinary, not of Newgate, but of nature. His poetical morality is taken from Burn's Justice, or the Statutes against Vagrants. He sets his own imagination in the stocks, and his Muse, like Malvolio, 'wears cruel garters.' He collects all the petty vices of the human heart, and superintends, as in a panopticon, a select circle of rural malefactors. He makes out the poor to be as bad as the rich—a sort of vermin for the others to hunt down and trample upon, and this he thinks a good piece of work. With him there are but two moral categories, riches and poverty, authority and dependence. His parish apprentice, Richard Monday, and his wealthy baronet, Sir Richard Monday, of Monday-place, are the same individual—the extremes of the same character, and of his whole system. 'The latter end of his Commonwealth does not forget the beginning.' But his parish ethics are the very worst model for a state: any thing more degrading and

helpless cannot well be imagined. He exhibits just the contrary view of human life to that which Gay has done in his Beggar's Opera. In a word, Crabbe is the only poet who has attempted and succeeded in the *still life* of tragedy: who gives the stagnation of hope and fear—the deformity of vice without the temptation—the pain of sympathy without the interest—and who seems to rely, for the delight he is to convey to his reader, on the truth and accuracy with which he describes only what is disagreeable.

The best descriptive poetry is not, after all, to be found in our descriptive poets. There are set descriptions of the flowers, for instance, in Thomson, Cowper, and others; but none equal to those in Milton's Lycidas, and in the Winter's Tale.

We have few good pastorals in the language. Our manners are not Arcadian; our climate is not an eternal spring; our age is not the age of gold. We have no pastoral-writers equal to Theocritus, nor any landscapes like those of Claude Lorraine. The best parts of Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar are two fables, Mother Hubberd's Tale, and the Oak and the Briar; which last is as splendid a piece of oratory as any to be found in the records of the eloquence of the British senate! Browne, who came after Spenser, and Withers, have left some pleasing allegorical poems of this kind. Pope's are as full of senseless finery and trite affectation, as if a peer of the realm were to sit for his picture with a crook and cocked hat on, smiling with an insipid air of no-meaning, between nature and fashion. Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia is a lasting monument of perverted power; where an image of extreme beauty, as that of 'the shepherd boy piping as though he should never be old,' peeps out once in a hundred folio pages, amidst heaps of intricate sophistry and scholastic quaintness. It is not at all like Nicholas Poussin's picture, in which he represents some shepherds wandering out in a morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription—'I also was an Arcadian!' Perhaps the best pastoral in the language is that prose-poem, Walton's Complete Angler. That well-known work has a beauty and romantic interest equal to its simplicity, and arising out of it. In the description of a fishing-tackle, you perceive the piety and humanity of the author's mind. It is to be doubted whether Sannazarius's Piscatory Eclogues are equal to the scenes described by Walton on the banks of the river Lea. He gives the feeling of the open air: we walk with him along the dusty road-side, or repose on the banks of the river under a shady tree; and in watching for the finny prey, imbibe what he beautifully calls 'the patience and simplicity of poor honest fishermen.' We accompany them to their inn at night, and partake of their simple, but delicious fare; while Maud, the pretty milk-maid,

at her mother's desire, sings the classical ditties of the poet Marlow; 'Come live with me, and be my love.' Good cheer is not neglected in this work, any more than in Homer, or any other history that sets a proper value on the good things of this life. The prints in the Complete Angler give an additional reality and interest to the scenes it describes. While Tottenham Cross shall stand, and longer, thy work, amiable and happy old man, shall last!—It is in the notes to it that we find that character of 'a fair and happy milkmaid,' by Sir Thomas Overbury, which may vie in beauty and feeling with Chaucer's character of Griselda.

'A fair and happy milk-maid is a country wench that is so far from making herself beautiful by art, that one look of her's is able to put all face-physic out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator to commend virtue, therefore minds it not. All her excellences stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is herself) is far better than outsides of tissue; for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silk-worm, she is decked in innocency, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long in bed, spoil both her complexion and conditions. Nature hath taught her, too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul: she rises therefore with chanticleer, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made haycock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity; and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of Fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, being her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair; and in choosing her garments, counts no bravery in the world like decency. The garden and bee-hive are all her physic and chirurgery, and she lives the longer for 't. She dares go alone, and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, because she means none: yet, to say the truth, she is never alone, for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers, but short ones; yet they have their efficacy, in that they are not palled with ensuing idle cogitations. Lastly, her dreams are so chaste, that she dare tell them; only a Friday's dream is all her superstition; that she conceals for fear of anger. Thus lives she; and all her care is she may die in the spring-time, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.'

The love of the country has been sung by poets, and echoed by philosophers; but the first have not attempted, and the last have been greatly puzzled to account for it. I do not know that any one has ever explained, satisfactorily, the true source of this feeling, or of that soothing emotion which the sight of the country, or a lively description of rural objects hardly ever fails to infuse into the mind. Some have ascribed this feeling to the natural beauty of the objects them-

selves; others to the freedom from care, the silence and tranquillity which scenes of retirement afford; others to the healthy and innocent employments of a country life; others to the simplicity of country manners, and others to a variety of different causes; but none to the right one. All these, indeed, have their effect; but there is another principal one which has not been touched upon, or only slightly glanced at. I will not, however, imitate Mr. Horne Tooke, who after enumerating seventeen different definitions of the verb, and laughing at them all as deficient and nugatory, at the end of two quarto volumes does not tell us what the verb really is, and has left posterity to pluck out 'the heart of his mystery.' I will say at once what it is that distinguishes this interest from others, and that is its *abstractedness*. The interest we feel in human nature is exclusive, and confined to the individual; the interest we feel in external nature is common, and transferable from one object to all others of the same class. Thus.

Rousseau in his Confessions relates, that when he took possession of his room at Annecy, he found that he could see 'a little spot of green' from his window, which endeared his situation the more to him, because, he says, it was the first time he had had this object constantly before him since he left Boissy, the place where he was at school when a child.[1] Some such feeling as that here described will be found lurking at the bottom of all our attachments of this sort. Were it not for the recollections habitually associated with them, natural objects could not interest the mind in the manner they do. No doubt, the sky is beautiful, the clouds sail majestically along its bosom; the sun is cheering; there is something exquisitely graceful in the manner in which a plant or tree puts forth its branches; the motion with which they bend and tremble in the evening breeze is soft and lovely; there is music in the babbling of a brook; the view from the top of a mountain is full of grandeur; nor can we behold the ocean with indifference. Or, as the Minstrel sweetly sings,

> 'Oh, how canst thou renounce the boundless store
> Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
> The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
> The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
> All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
> And all that echoes to the song of even,
> All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
> And all the dread magnificence of heaven,
> Oh, how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!'

[1] Pope also declares that he had a particular regard for an old post which stood in the court-yard before the house where he was brought up.

It is not, however, the beautiful and magnificent alone that we admire in Nature; the most insignificant and rudest objects are often found connected with the strongest emotions; we become attached to the most common and familiar images, as to the face of a friend whom we have long known, and from whom we have received many benefits. It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in solitude, when the mind takes the strongest hold of things, and clings with the fondest interest to whatever strikes its attention; with change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends; it is because they have surrounded us in almost all situations, in joy and in sorrow, in pleasure and in pain; because they have been one chief source and nourishment of our feelings, and a part of our being, that we love them as we do ourselves.

There is, generally speaking, the same foundation for our love of Nature as for all our habitual attachments, namely, association of ideas. But this is not all. That which distinguishes this attachment from others is the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects; the associations connected with any one object extending to the whole class. Our having been attached to any particular person does not make us feel the same attachment to the next person we may chance to meet; but, if we have once associated strong feelings of delight with the objects of natural scenery, the tie becomes indissoluble, and we shall ever after feel the same attachment to other objects of the same sort. I remember when I was abroad, the trees, and grass, and wet leaves, rustling in the walks of the Thuilleries, seemed to be as much English, to be as much the same trees and grass, that I had always been used to, as the sun shining over my head was the same sun which I saw in England; the faces only were foreign to me. Whence comes this difference? It arises from our always imperceptibly connecting the idea of the individual with man, and only the idea of the class with natural objects. In the one case, the external appearance or physical structure is the least thing to be attended to; in the other, it is every thing. The springs that move the human form, and make it friendly or adverse to me, lie hid within it. There is an infinity of motives, passions, and ideas, contained in that narrow compass, of which I know nothing, and in which I have no share. Each individual is a world to himself, governed by a thousand contradictory and wayward impulses. I can, therefore, make no inference from one individual to another; nor can my habitual sentiments, with respect to any individual, extend beyond himself to others. A crowd of people presents a disjointed, confused, and unsatisfactory appearance to the eye, because there is nothing to

connect the motley assemblage into one continuous or general impression, unless when there is some common object of interest to fix their attention, as in the case of a full pit at the play-house. The same principle will also account for that feeling of littleness, vacuity, and perplexity, which a stranger feels on entering the streets of a populous city. Every individual he meets is a blow to his personal identity. Every new face is a teazing, unanswered riddle. He feels the same wearisome sensation in walking from Oxford Street to Temple Bar, as a person would do who should be compelled to read through the first leaf of all the volumes in a library. But it is otherwise with respect to nature. A flock of sheep is not a contemptible, but a beautiful sight. The greatest number and variety of physical objects do not puzzle the will, or distract the attention, but are massed together under one uniform and harmonious feeling. The heart reposes in greater security on the immensity of Nature's works, 'expatiates freely there,' and finds elbow room and breathing space. We are always at home with Nature. There is neither hypocrisy, caprice, nor mental reservation in her favours. Our intercourse with her is not liable to accident or change, suspicion or disappointment: she smiles on us still the same. A rose is always sweet, a lily is always beautiful: we do not hate the one, nor envy the other. If we have once enjoyed the cool shade of a tree, and been lulled into a deep repose by the sound of a brook running at its foot, we are sure that wherever we can find a shady stream, we can enjoy the same pleasure again; so that when we imagine these objects, we can easily form a mystic personification of the friendly power that inhabits them, Dryad or Naiad, offering its cool fountain or its tempting shade. Hence the origin of the Grecian mythology. All objects of the same kind being the same, not only in their appearance, but in their practical uses, we habitually confound them together under the same general idea; and whatever fondness we may have conceived for one, is immediately placed to the common account. The most opposite kinds and remote trains of feeling gradually go to enrich the same sentiment; and in our love of nature, there is all the force of individual attachment, combined with the most airy abstraction. It is this circumstance which gives that refinement, expansion, and wild interest, to feelings of this sort, when strongly excited, which every one must have experienced who is a true lover of nature.

It is the same setting sun that we see and remember year after year, through summer and winter, seed-time and harvest. The moon that shines above our heads, or plays through the checquered shade, is the same moon that we used to read of in Mrs. Radcliffe's romances. We see no difference in the trees first covered with leaves

in the spring. The dry reeds rustling on the side of a stream—the woods swept by the loud blast—the dark massy foliage of autumn—the grey trunks and naked branches of the trees in winter—the sequestered copse, and wide-extended heath—the glittering sunny showers, and December snows—are still the same, or accompanied with the same thoughts and feelings: there is no object, however trifling or rude, that does not in some mood or other find its way into the heart, as a link in the chain of our living being; and this it is that makes good that saying of the poet—

> 'To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'

Thus nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks; for there is that consent and mutual harmony among all her works, one undivided spirit pervading them throughout, that to him who has well acquainted himself with them, they speak always the same well-known language, striking on the heart, amidst unquiet thoughts and the tumult of the world, like the music of one's native tongue heard in some far-off country.

> 'My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began,
> So is it now I am a man,
> So shall it be when I grow old and die.
> The child 's the father of the man,
> And I would have my years to be
> Linked each to each by natural piety.'

The daisy that first strikes the child's eye in trying to leap over his own shadow, is the same flower that with timid upward glance implores the grown man not to tread upon it. Rousseau, in one of his botanical excursions, meeting with the periwinkle, fell upon his knees, crying out—*Ah! voila de la pervenche!* It was because he had thirty years before brought home the same flower with him in one of his rambles with Madame de Warens, near Chambery. It struck him as the same identical little blue flower that he remembered so well; and thirty years of sorrow and bitter regret were effaced from his memory. That, or a thousand other flowers of the same name, were the same to him, to the heart, and to the eye; but there was but one Madame Warens in the world, whose image was never absent from his thoughts; with whom flowers and verdure sprung up beneath his feet, and without whom all was cold and barren in nature and in his own breast. The cuckoo, 'that wandering voice,' that

comes and goes with the spring, mocks our ears with one note from youth to age; and the lapwing, screaming round the traveller's path, repeats for ever the same sad story of Tereus and Philomel!

LECTURE VI

ON SWIFT, YOUNG, GRAY, COLLINS, &c.

I SHALL in the present Lecture go back to the age of Queen Anne, and endeavour to give a cursory account of the most eminent of our poets, of whom I have not already spoken, from that period to the present.

The three principal poets among the wits of Queen Anne's reign, next to Pope, were Prior, Swift, and Gay. Parnell, though a good-natured, easy man, and a friend to poets and the Muses, was himself little more than an occasional versifier; and Arbuthnot, who had as much wit as the best of them, chose to shew it in prose, and not in verse. He had a very notable share in the immortal History of John Bull, and the inimitable and praise-worthy Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus. There has been a great deal said and written about the plagiarisms of Sterne; but the only real plagiarism he has been guilty of (if such theft were a crime), is in taking Tristram Shandy's father from Martin's, the elder Scriblerus. The original idea of the character, that is, of the opinionated, captious old gentleman, who is pedantic, not from profession, but choice, belongs to Arbuthnot.—Arbuthnot's style is distinguished from that of his contemporaries, even by a greater degree of terseness and conciseness. He leaves out every superfluous word; is sparing of connecting particles, and introductory phrases; uses always the simplest forms of construction; and is more a master of the idiomatic peculiarities and internal resources of the language than almost any other writer. There is a research in the choice of a plain, as well as of an ornamented or learned style; and, in fact, a great deal more. Among common English words, there may be ten expressing the same thing with different degrees of force and propriety, and only one of them the very word we want, because it is the only one that answers exactly with the idea we have in our minds. Each word in familiar use has a different set of associations and shades of meaning attached to it, and distinguished from each other by inveterate custom; and it is in having the whole of these at our command, and in knowing which to choose, as they are called for by the occasion, that the perfection of a pure conversational prose-style consists. But in writing a florid and artificial style,

neither the same range of invention, nor the same quick sense of propriety—nothing but learning is required. If you know the words, and their general meaning, it is sufficient: it is impossible you should know the nicer inflections of signification, depending on an endless variety of application, in expressions borrowed from a foreign or dead language. They all impose upon the ear alike, because they are not familiar to it; the only distinction left is between the pompous and the plain; the *sesquipedalia verba* have this advantage, that they are all of one length; and any words are equally fit for a learned style, so that we have never heard them before. Themistocles thought that the same sounding epithets could not suit all subjects, as the same dress does not fit all persons. The style of our modern prose-writers is very fine in itself; but it wants variety of inflection and adaptation; it hinders us from seeing the differences of the things it undertakes to describe.

What I have here insisted on will be found to be the leading distinction between the style of Swift, Arbuthnot, Steele, and the other writers of the age of Queen Anne, and the style of Dr. Johnson, which succeeded to it. The one is English, and the other is not. The writers first mentioned, in order to express their thoughts, looked about them for the properest word to convey any idea, that the language which they spoke, and which their countrymen understood, afforded: Dr. Johnson takes the first English word that offers, and by translating it at a venture into the first Greek or Latin word he can think of, only retaining the English termination, produces an extraordinary effect upon the reader, by much the same sort of mechanical process that Trim converted the old jack-boots into a pair of new mortars.

Dr. Johnson was a lazy learned man, who liked to think and talk, better than to read or write; who, however, wrote much and well, but too often by rote. His long compound Latin phrases required less thought, and took up more room than others. What shews the facilities afforded by this style of imposing generalization, is, that it was instantly adopted with success by all those who were writers by profession, or who were not; and that at present, we cannot see a lottery puff or a quack advertisement pasted against a wall, that is not perfectly Johnsonian in style. Formerly, the learned had the privilege of translating their notions into Latin; and a great privilege it was, as it confined the reputation and emoluments of learning to themselves. Dr. Johnson may be said to have naturalised this privilege, by inventing a sort of jargon translated half-way out of one language into the other, which raised the Doctor's reputation, and confounded all ranks in literature.

In the short period above alluded to, authors professed to write as other men spoke; every body now affects to speak as authors write; and any one who retains the use of his mother tongue, either in writing or conversation, is looked upon as a very illiterate character.

Prior and Gay belong, in the characteristic excellences of their style, to the same class of writers with Suckling, Rochester, and Sedley: the former imbibed most of the licentious levity of the age of Charles II. and carried it on beyond the Revolution under King William. Prior has left no single work equal to Gay's Fables, or the Beggar's Opera. But in his lyrical and fugitive pieces he has shown even more genius, more playfulness, more mischievous gaiety. No one has exceeded him in the laughing grace with which he glances at a subject that will not bear examining, with which he gently hints at what cannot be directly insisted on, with which he half conceals, and half draws aside the veil from some of the Muses' nicest mysteries. His Muse is, in fact, a giddy wanton flirt, who spends her time in playing at snap-dragon and blind-man's buff, who tells what she should not, and knows more than she tells. She laughs at the tricks she shews us, and blushes, or would be thought to do so, at what she keeps concealed. Prior has translated several of Fontaine's Tales from the French; and they have lost nothing in the translation, either of their wit or malice. I need not name them: but the one I like the most, is that of Cupid in search of Venus's doves. No one could insinuate a knavish plot, a tender point, a loose moral, with such unconscious archness, and careless raillery, as if he gained new self-possession and adroitness from the perplexity and confusion into which he throws scrupulous imaginations, and knew how to seize on all the ticklish parts of his subject, from their involuntarily shrinking under his grasp. Some of his imitations of Boileau's servile addresses to Louis XIV. which he has applied with a happy mixture of wit and patriotic enthusiasm to King William, or as he familiarly calls him, to

> 'Little Will, the scourge of France,
> No Godhead, but the first of men,'

are excellent, and shew the same talent for *double-entendre* and the same gallantry of spirit, whether in the softer lyric, or the more lively heroic. Some of Prior's *bon mots* are the best that are recorded.—His serious poetry, as his *Solomon*, is as heavy as his familiar style was light and agreeable. His moral Muse is a Magdalen, and should not have obtruded herself on public view. Henry and Emma is a paraphrase of the old ballad of the Nut-brown Maid, and not so good as the original. In short, as we often see in other cases, where

men thwart their own genius, Prior's sentimental and romantic productions are mere affectation, the result not of powerful impulse or real feeling, but of a consciousness of his deficiencies, and a wish to supply their place by labour and art.

Gay was sometimes grosser than Prior, not systematically, but inadvertently—from not being so well aware of what he was about; nor was there the same necessity for caution, for his grossness is by no means so seductive or inviting.

Gay's Fables are certainly a work of great merit, both as to the quantity of invention implied, and as to the elegance and facility of the execution. They are, however, spun out too long; the descriptions and narrative are too diffuse and desultory; and the moral is sometimes without point. They are more like Tales than Fables. The best are, perhaps, the Hare with Many Friends, the Monkeys, and the Fox at the Point of Death. His Pastorals are pleasing and poetical. But his capital work is his Beggar's Opera. It is indeed a masterpiece of wit and genius, not to say of morality. In composing it, he chose a very unpromising ground to work upon, and he has prided himself in adorning it with all the graces, the precision, and brilliancy of style. It is a vulgar error to call this a vulgar play. So far from it, that I do not scruple to say that it appears to me one of the most refined productions in the language. The elegance of the composition is in exact proportion to the coarseness of the materials: by 'happy alchemy of mind,' the author has extracted an essence of refinement from the dregs of human life, and turns its very dross into gold. The scenes, characters, and incidents are, in themselves, of the lowest and most disgusting kind: but, by the sentiments and reflections which are put into the mouths of highwaymen, turnkeys, their mistresses, wives, or daughters, he has converted this motley group into a set of fine gentlemen and ladies, satirists and philosophers. He has also effected this transformation without once violating probability, or 'o'erstepping the modesty of nature.' In fact, Gay has turned the tables on the critics; and by the assumed licence of the mock-heroic style, has enabled himself to *do justice to nature*, that is, to give all the force, truth, and locality of real feeling to the thoughts and expressions, without being called to the bar of false taste and affected delicacy. The extreme beauty and feeling of the song, 'Woman is like the fair flower in its lustre,' are only equalled by its characteristic propriety and *naïveté*. *Polly* describes her lover going to the gallows, with the same touching simplicity, and with all the natural fondness of a young girl in her circumstances, who sees in his approaching catastrophe nothing but the misfortunes and the personal accomplishments of the object of her affections. 'I see

him sweeter than the nosegay in his hand; the admiring crowd lament that so lovely a youth should come to an untimely end:—even butchers weep, and Jack Ketch refuses his fee rather than consent to tie the fatal knot.' The preservation of the character and costume is complete. It has been said by a great authority—'There is some soul of goodness in things evil':—and the *Beggar's Opera* is a good-natured but instructive comment on this text. The poet has thrown all the gaiety and sunshine of the imagination, all the intoxication of pleasure, and the vanity of despair, round the short-lived existence of his heroes; while *Peachum* and *Lockitt* are seen in the back-ground, parcelling out their months and weeks between them. The general view exhibited of human life is of the most subtle and abstracted kind. The author has, with great felicity, brought out the good qualities and interesting emotions almost inseparable from the lowest conditions; and with the same penetrating glance, has detected the disguises which rank and circumstances lend to exalted vice. Every line in this sterling comedy sparkles with wit, and is fraught with the keenest sarcasm. The very wit, however, takes off from the offensiveness of the satire; and I have seen great statesmen, very great statesmen, heartily enjoying the joke, laughing most immoderately at the compliments paid to them as not much worse than pickpockets and cut-throats in a different line of life, and pleased, as it were, to see themselves humanised by some sort of fellowship with their kind. Indeed, it may be said that the moral of the piece is *to shew the vulgarity of vice*; or that the same violations of integrity and decorum, the same habitual sophistry in palliating their want of principle, are common to the great and powerful, with the meanest and most contemptible of the species. What can be more convincing than the arguments used by these would-be politicians, to shew that in hypocrisy, selfishness, and treachery, they do not come up to many of their betters? The exclamation of *Mrs. Peachum*, when her daughter marries *Macheath*, 'Hussy, hussy, you will be as ill used, and as much neglected, as if you had married a lord,' is worth all Miss Hannah More's laboured invectives on the laxity of the manners of high life!

I shall conclude this account of Gay with his verses on Sir Richard Blackmore, which may serve at once as a specimen of his own manner, and as a character of a voluminous contemporary poet, who was admired by Mr. Locke, and knighted by King William III.

'See who ne'er was nor will be half-read,
Who first sung Arthur, then sung Alfred;
Praised great Eliza in God's anger,
Till all true Englishmen cried, 'Hang her!'—

Maul'd human wit in one thick satire ;
Next in three books spoil'd human nature :
Undid Creation at a jerk,
And of Redemption made damn'd work.
Then took his Muse at once, and dipt her
Full in the middle of the Scripture.
What wonders there the man, grown old, did ?
Sternhold himself he out Sternholded.
Made David seem so mad and freakish,
All thought him just what thought King Achish.
No mortal read his Solomon
But judg'd Re'boam his own son.
Moses he serv'd as Moses Pharaoh,
And Deborah as she Siserah ;
Made Jeremy full sore to cry,
And Job himself curse God and die.
What punishment all this must follow ?
Shall Arthur use him like King Tollo ?
Shall David as Uriah slay him ?
Or dextrous Deborah Siserah him ?
No !—none of these ! Heaven spare his life !
But send him, honest Job, thy wife ! '

Gay's Trivia, or Art of Walking the Streets, is as pleasant as walking the streets must have been at the time when it was written. His ballad of Black Eyed Susan is one of the most delightful that can be imagined ; nor do I see that it is a bit the worse for Mr. Jekyll's parody on it.

Swift's reputation as a poet has been in a manner obscured by the greater splendour, by the natural force and inventive genius of his prose writings ; but if he had never written either the Tale of a Tub or Gulliver's Travels, his name merely as a poet would have come down to us, and have gone down to posterity with well-earned honours. His Imitations of Horace, and still more his Verses on his own Death, place him in the first rank of agreeable moralists in verse. There is not only a dry humour, an exquisite tone of irony, in these productions of his pen ; but there is a touching, unpretending pathos, mixed up with the most whimsical and eccentric strokes of pleasantry and satire. His Description of the Morning in London, and of a City Shower, which were first published in the Tatler, are among the most delightful of the contents of that very delightful work. Swift shone as one of the most sensible of the poets ; he is also distinguished as one of the most nonsensical of them. No man has written so many lack-a-daisical, slip-shod, tedious, trifling, foolish, fantastical verses as he, which are so little an imputation on the wisdom of the writer ; and which, in fact, only shew his readiness

to oblige others, and to forget himself. He has gone so far as to invent a new stanza of fourteen and sixteen syllable lines for Mary the cookmaid to vent her budget of nothings, and for Mrs. Harris to gossip with the deaf old housekeeper. Oh, when shall we have such another Rector of Laracor!—The Tale of a Tub is one of the most masterly compositions in the language, whether for thought, wit, or style. It is so capital and undeniable a proof of the author's talents, that Dr. Johnson, who did not like Swift, would not allow that he wrote it. It is hard that the same performance should stand in the way of a man's promotion to a bishopric, as wanting gravity, and at the same time be denied to be his, as having too much wit. It is a pity the Doctor did not find out some graver author, for whom he felt a critical kindness, on whom to father this splendid but unacknowledged production. Dr. Johnson could not deny that Gulliver's Travels were his; he therefore disputed their merits, and said that after the first idea of them was conceived, they were easy to execute; all the rest followed mechanically. I do not know how that may be; but the mechanism employed is something very different from any that the author of Rasselas was in the habit of bringing to bear on such occasions. There is nothing more futile, as well as invidious, than this mode of criticising a work of original genius. Its greatest merit is supposed to be in the invention; and you say, very wisely, that it is not *in the execution*. You might as well take away the merit of the invention of the telescope, by saying that, after its uses were explained and understood, any ordinary eyesight could look through it. Whether the excellence of Gulliver's Travels is in the conception or the execution, is of little consequence; the power is somewhere, and it is a power that has moved the world. The power is not that of big words and vaunting common places. Swift left these to those who wanted them; and has done what his acuteness and intensity of mind alone could enable any one to conceive or to perform. His object was to strip empty pride and grandeur of the imposing air which external circumstances throw around them; and for this purpose he has cheated the imagination of the illusions which the prejudices of sense and of the world put upon it, by reducing every thing to the abstract predicament of size. He enlarges or diminishes the scale, as he wishes to shew the insignificance or the grossness of our overweening self-love. That he has done this with mathematical precision, with complete presence of mind and perfect keeping, in a manner that comes equally home to the understanding of the man and of the child, does not take away from the merit of the work or the genius of the author. He has taken a new view of human nature, such as a being of a higher sphere might take of it; he has torn the scales from off

his moral vision; he has tried an experiment upon human life, and sifted its pretensions from the alloy of circumstances; he has measured it with a rule, has weighed it in a balance, and found it, for the most part, wanting and worthless—in substance and in shew. Nothing solid, nothing valuable is left in his system but virtue and wisdom. What a libel is this upon mankind! What a convincing proof of misanthropy! What presumption and what *malice prepense*, to shew men what they are, and to teach them what they ought to be! What a mortifying stroke aimed at national glory, is that unlucky incident of Gulliver's wading across the channel and carrying off the whole fleet of Blefuscu! After that, we have only to consider which of the contending parties was in the right. What a shock to personal vanity is given in the account of Gulliver's nurse Glumdalclitch! Still, notwithstanding the disparagement to her personal charms, her good-nature remains the same amiable quality as before. I cannot see the harm, the misanthropy, the immoral and degrading tendency of this. The moral lesson is as fine as the intellectual exhibition is amusing. It is an attempt to tear off the mask of imposture from the world; and nothing but imposture has a right to complain of it. It is, indeed, the way with our quacks in morality to preach up the dignity of human nature, to pamper pride and hypocrisy with the idle mockeries of the virtues they pretend to, and which they have not: but it was not Swift's way to cant morality, or any thing else; nor did his genius prompt him to write unmeaning panegyrics on mankind!

I do not, therefore, agree with the estimate of Swift's moral or intellectual character, given by an eminent critic, who does not seem to have forgotten the party politics of Swift. I do not carry my political resentments so far back: I can at this time of day forgive Swift for having been a Tory. I feel little disturbance (whatever I might think of them) at his political sentiments, which died with him, considering how much else he has left behind him of a more solid and imperishable nature! If he had, indeed, (like some others) merely left behind him the lasting infamy of a destroyer of his country, or the shining example of an apostate from liberty, I might have thought the case altered.

The determination with which Swift persisted in a preconcerted theory, savoured of the morbid affection of which he died. There is nothing more likely to drive a man mad, than the being unable to get rid of the idea of the distinction between right and wrong, and an obstinate, constitutional preference of the true to the agreeable. Swift was not a Frenchman. In this respect he differed from Rabelais and Voltaire. They have been accounted the three greatest wits in modern times; but their wit was of a peculiar kind in each. They

are little beholden to each other; there is some resemblance between Lord Peter in the Tale of a Tub, and Rabelais' Friar John; but in general they are all three authors of a substantive character in themselves. Swift's wit (particularly in his chief prose works) was serious, saturnine, and practical; Rabelais' was fantastical and joyous; Voltaire's was light, sportive, and verbal. Swift's wit was the wit of sense; Rabelais', the wit of nonsense; Voltaire's, of indifference to both. The ludicrous in Swift arises out of his keen sense of impropriety, his soreness and impatience of the least absurdity. He separates, with a severe and caustic air, truth from falsehood, folly from wisdom, 'shews vice her own image, scorn her own feature'; and it is the force, the precision, and the honest abruptness with which the separation is made, that excites our surprise, our admiration, and laughter. He sets a mark of reprobation on that which offends good sense and good manners, which cannot be mistaken, and which holds it up to our ridicule and contempt ever after. His occasional disposition to trifling (already noticed) was a relaxation from the excessive earnestness of his mind. *Indignatio facit versus.* His better genius was his spleen. It was the biting acrimony of his temper that sharpened his other faculties. The truth of his perceptions produced the pointed coruscations of his wit; his playful irony was the result of inward bitterness of thought; his imagination was the product of the literal, dry, incorrigible tenaciousness of his understanding. He endeavoured to escape from the persecution of realities into the regions of fancy, and invented his Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians, Yahoos, and Houynhyms, as a diversion to the more painful knowledge of the world around him: *they* only made him laugh, while men and women made him angry. His feverish impatience made him view the infirmities of that great baby the world, with the same scrutinizing glance and jealous irritability that a parent regards the failings of its offspring; but, as Rousseau has well observed, parents have not on this account been supposed to have more affection for other people's children than their own. In other respects, and except from the sparkling effervescence of his gall, Swift's brain was as 'dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.' He hated absurdity—Rabelais loved it, exaggerated it with supreme satisfaction, luxuriated in its endless varieties, rioted in nonsense, 'reigned there and revelled.' He dwelt on the absurd and ludicrous for the pleasure they gave him, not for the pain. He lived upon laughter, and died laughing. He indulged his vein, and took his full swing of folly. He did not baulk his fancy or his readers. His wit was to him 'as riches fineless'; he saw no end of his wealth in that way, and set no limits to his extravagance: he was communicative, prodigal, boundless, and

inexhaustible. His were the Saturnalia of wit, the riches and the royalty, the health and long life. He is intoxicated with gaiety, mad with folly. His animal spirits drown him in a flood of mirth: his blood courses up and down his veins like wine. His thirst of enjoyment is as great as his thirst of drink: his appetite for good things of all sorts is unsatisfied, and there is a never-ending supply. *Discourse is dry;* so they moisten their words in their cups, and relish their dry jests with plenty of Botargos and dried neats' tongues. It is like Camacho's wedding in Don Quixote, where Sancho ladled out whole pullets and fat geese from the soup-kettles at a pull. The flagons are set a running, their tongues wag at the same time, and their mirth flows as a river. How Friar John roars and lays about him in the vineyard! How Panurge whines in the storm, and how dexterously he contrives to throw the sheep overboard! How much Pantagruel behaves like a wise king! How Gargantua mewls, and pules, and slabbers his nurse, and demeans himself most like a royal infant! what provinces he devours! what seas he drinks up! How he eats, drinks, and sleeps—sleeps, eats, and drinks! The style of Rabelais is no less prodigious than his matter. His words are of marrow, unctuous, dropping fatness. He was a mad wag, the king of good fellows, and prince of practical philosophers!

Rabelais was a Frenchman of the old school—Voltaire of the new. The wit of the one arose from an exuberance of enjoyment—of the other, from an excess of indifference, real or assumed. Voltaire had no enthusiasm for one thing or another: he made light of every thing. In his hands all things turn to chaff and dross, as the pieces of silver money in the Arabian Nights were changed by the hands of the enchanter into little dry crumbling leaves! He is a Parisian. He never exaggerates, is never violent: he treats things with the most provoking *sang froid*; and expresses his contempt by the most indirect hints, and in the fewest words, as if he hardly thought them worth even his contempt. He retains complete possession of himself and of his subject. He does not effect his purpose by the eagerness of his blows, but by the delicacy of his tact. The poisoned wound he inflicted was so fine, as scarcely to be felt till it rankled and festered in its 'mortal consequences.' His callousness was an excellent foil for the antagonists he had mostly to deal with. He took knaves and fools on his shield well. He stole away its cloak from grave imposture. If he reduced other things below their true value, making them seem worthless and hollow, he did not degrade the pretensions of tyranny and superstition below their true value, by making them seem utterly worthless and hollow, as contemptible as they were odious. This was the service he rendered to truth and mankind!

His *Candide* is a masterpiece of wit. It has been called 'the dull product of a scoffer's pen'; it is indeed the 'product of a scoffer's pen'; but after reading the Excursion, few people will think it *dull*. It is in the most perfect keeping, and without any appearance of effort. Every sentence tells, and the whole reads like one sentence. There is something sublime in Martin's sceptical indifference to moral good and evil. It is the repose of the grave. It is better to suffer this living death, than a living martyrdom. 'Nothing can touch him further.' The moral of Candide (such as it is) is the same as that of Rasselas: the execution is different. Voltaire says, 'A great book is a great evil.' Dr. Johnson would have laboured this short apophthegm into a voluminous common-place. Voltaire's traveller (in another work) being asked 'whether he likes black or white mutton best,' replies that 'he is indifferent, provided it is tender.' Dr. Johnson did not get at a conclusion by so short a way as this. If Voltaire's licentiousness is objected to me, I say, let it be placed to its true account, the manners of the age and court in which he lived. The lords and ladies of the bedchamber in the reign of Louis xv. found no fault with the immoral tendency of his writings. Why then should our modern *purists* quarrel with them?—But to return.

Young is a gloomy epigrammatist. He has abused great powers both of thought and language. His moral reflections are sometimes excellent; but he spoils their beauty by overloading them with a religious horror, and at the same time giving them all the smart turns and quaint expression of an enigma or repartee in verse. The well-known lines on Procrastination are in his best manner:

> 'Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
> Next day the fatal precedent will plead;
> Thus on, till wisdom is push'd out of life.
> Procrastination is the thief of time;
> Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
> And to the mercies of a moment leaves
> The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
>
> Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears
> The palm, "That all men are about to live,"
> For ever on the brink of being born.
> All pay themselves the compliment to think
> They, one day, shall not drivel; and their pride
> On this reversion takes up ready praise;
> At least, their own; their future selves applauds;
> How excellent that life they ne'er will lead!
> Time lodg'd in their own hands is Folly's vails:
> That lodg'd in Fate's, to Wisdom they consign;
> The thing they can't but purpose, they postpone.

'Tis not in Folly, not to scorn a fool;
And scarce in human Wisdom to do more.
All Promise is poor dilatory man,
And that through every stage. When young, indeed,
In full content we, sometimes, nobly rest,
Un-anxious for ourselves; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise.
At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to Resolve;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves, and re-resolves; then dies the same.

And why? Because he thinks himself immortal.
All men think all men mortal, but themselves;
Themselves, when some alarming shock of fate
Strikes through their wounded hearts the sudden dread;
But their hearts wounded, like the wounded air,
Soon close; where past the shaft, no trace is found.
As from the wing no scar the sky retains;
The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
So dies in human hearts the thought of death.
Ev'n with the tender tear which nature sheds
O'er those we love, we drop it in their grave.'

His Universal Passion is a keen and powerful satire; but the effort takes from the effect, and oppresses attention by perpetual and violent demands upon it. His tragedy of the Revenge is monkish and scholastic. Zanga is a vulgar caricature of Iago. The finest lines in it are the burst of triumph at the end, when his revenge is completed:

'Let Europe and her pallid sons go weep,
Let Afric on her hundred thrones rejoice,' &c.

Collins is a writer of a very different stamp, who had perhaps less general power of mind than Young; but he had that true *vivida vis*, that genuine inspiration, which alone can give birth to the highest efforts of poetry. He leaves stings in the minds of his readers, certain traces of thought and feelings which never wear out, because nature had left them in his own mind. He is the only one of the minor poets of whom, if he had lived, it cannot be said that he might not have done the greatest things. The germ is there. He is sometimes affected, unmeaning, and obscure; but he also catches rich glimpses of the bowers of Paradise, and has lofty aspirations after the highest seats of the Muses. With a great deal of tinsel and splendid patch-work, he has not been able to hide the solid sterling

ore of genius. In his best works there is an attic simplicity, a pathos, and fervour of imagination, which make us the more lament that the efforts of his mind were at first depressed by neglect and pecuniary embarrassment, and at length buried in the gloom of an unconquerable and fatal malady. How many poets have gone through all the horrors of poverty and contempt, and ended their days in moping melancholy or moody madness!

> 'We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
> But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.'

Is this the fault of themselves, of nature in tempering them of too fine a clay, or of the world, that spurner of living, and patron of dead merit? Read the account of Collins—with hopes frustrated, with faculties blighted, at last, when it was too late for himself or others, receiving the deceitful favours of relenting Fortune, which served only to throw their sunshine on his decay, and to light him to an early grave. He was found sitting with every spark of imagination extinguished, and with only the faint traces of memory and reason left—with only one book in his room, the Bible; 'but that,' he said, 'was the best.' A melancholy damp hung like an unwholesome mildew upon his faculties—a canker had consumed the flower of his life. He produced works of genius, and the public regarded them with scorn: he aimed at excellence that should be his own, and his friends treated his efforts as the wanderings of fatuity. The proofs of his capacity are, his Ode on Evening, his Ode on the Passions (particularly the fine personification of Hope), his Ode to Fear, the Dirge in Cymbeline, the Lines on Thomson's Grave, and his Eclogues, parts of which are admirable. But perhaps his Ode on the Poetical Character is the best of all. A rich distilled perfume emanates from it like the breath of genius; a golden cloud envelopes it; a honeyed paste of poetic diction encrusts it, like the candied coat of the auricula. His Ode to Evening shews equal genius in the images and versification. The sounds steal slowly over the ear, like the gradual coming on of evening itself:

> 'If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
> May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
> Like thy own solemn springs,
> Thy springs and dying gales,
>
> O nymph reserv'd, while now the bright-haired sun
> Sits on yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts
> With brede ethereal wove,
> O'erhang his wavy bed:

Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd bat,
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises midst the twilight path,
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum.
Now teach me, maid compos'd,
To breathe some soften'd strain,

Whose numbers stealing through thy darkling vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial, lov'd return!

For when thy folding star arising shews
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours and Elves
Who slept in flow'rs the day,

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,
The pensive Pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shadowy car;

Then lead, calm Votress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallow'd pile,
Or upland fallows grey
Reflect its last cool gleam.

But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut,
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim discover'd spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;

While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or Winter yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train,
And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy favourite name.'

Hammond, whose poems are bound up with Collins's, in Bell's pocket edition, was a young gentleman, who appears to have fallen in love about the year 1740, and who translated Tibullus into English verse, to let his mistress and the public know of it.

I should conceive that Collins had a much greater poetical genius than Gray: he had more of that fine madness which is inseparable from it, of its turbid effervescence, of all that pushes it to the verge of agony or rapture. Gray's Pindaric Odes are, I believe, generally given up at present: they are stately and pedantic, a kind of methodical borrowed phrenzy. But I cannot so easily give up, nor will the world be in any haste to part with his Elegy in a Country Church-yard: it is one of the most classical productions that ever was penned by a refined and thoughtful mind, moralising on human life. Mr. Coleridge (in his Literary Life) says, that his friend Mr. Wordsworth had undertaken to shew that the language of the Elegy is unintelligible: it has, however, been understood! The Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College is more mechanical and common-place; but it touches on certain strings about the heart, that vibrate in unison with it to our latest breath. No one ever passes by Windsor's 'stately heights,' or sees the distant spires of Eton College below, without thinking of Gray. He deserves that we should think of him; for he thought of others, and turned a trembling, ever-watchful ear to 'the still sad music of humanity.'—His Letters are inimitably fine. If his poems are sometimes finical and pedantic, his prose is quite free from affectation. He pours his thoughts out upon paper as they arise in his mind; and they arise in his mind without pretence, or constraint, from the pure impulse of learned leisure and contemplative indolence. He is not here on stilts or in buckram; but smiles in his easy chair, as he moralises through the loopholes of retreat, on the bustle and raree-show of the world, or on 'those reverend bedlams, colleges and schools!' He had nothing to do but to read and to think, and to tell his friends what he read and thought. His life was a luxurious, thoughtful dream. 'Be mine,' he says in one of his Letters, 'to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon.' And in another, to shew his contempt for action and the turmoils of ambition, he says to some one, 'Don't you remember Lords—— and——, who are now great statesmen, little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my part, I do not feel a bit wiser, or bigger, or older than I did then.' What an equivalent for not being wise or great, to be always young! What a happiness never to lose or gain any thing in the game of human life, by being never any thing more than a looker-on!

How different from Shenstone, who only wanted to be looked at:

who withdrew from the world to be followed by the crowd, and courted popularity by affecting privacy! His Letters shew him to have lived in a continual fever of petty vanity, and to have been a finished literary coquet. He seems always to say, 'You will find nothing in the world so amiable as Nature and me: come, and admire us.' His poems are indifferent and tasteless, except his Pastoral Ballad, his Lines on Jemmy Dawson, and his School-mistress, which last is a perfect piece of writing.

Akenside had in him the materials of poetry, but he was hardly a great poet. He improved his Pleasures of the Imagination in the subsequent editions, by pruning away a great many redundances of style and ornament. Armstrong is better, though he has not chosen a very exhilarating subject — The Art of Preserving Health. Churchill's Satires on the Scotch, and Characters of the Players, are as good as the subjects deserved—they are strong, coarse, and full of an air of hardened assurance. I ought not to pass over without mention Green's Poem on the Spleen, or Dyer's Grongar Hill.

The principal name of the period we are now come to is that of Goldsmith, than which few names stand higher or fairer in the annals of modern literature. One should have his own pen to describe him as he ought to be described—amiable, various, and bland, with careless inimitable grace touching on every kind of excellence—with manners unstudied, but a gentle heart—performing miracles of skill from pure happiness of nature, and whose greatest fault was ignorance of his own worth. As a poet, he is the most flowing and elegant of our versifiers since Pope, with traits of artless nature which Pope had not, and with a peculiar felicity in his turns upon words, which he constantly repeated with delightful effect: such as—

> '—— His lot, though small,
> He sees that little lot, the lot of all.'
>
> * * * * *
>
> 'And turn'd and look'd, and turn'd to look again.'

As a novelist, his Vicar of Wakefield has charmed all Europe. What reader is there in the civilised world, who is not the better for the story of the washes which the worthy Dr. Primrose demolished so deliberately with the poker—for the knowledge of the guinea which the Miss Primroses kept unchanged in their pockets—the adventure of the picture of the Vicar's family, which could not be got into the house—and that of the Flamborough family, all painted with oranges in their hands—or for the story of the case of shagreen spectacles and the cosmogony?

As a comic writer, his Tony Lumpkin draws forth new powers from Mr. Liston's face. That alone is praise enough for it. Poor Goldsmith! how happy he has made others! how unhappy he was in himself! He never had the pleasure of reading his own works! He had only the satisfaction of good-naturedly relieving the necessities of others, and the consolation of being harassed to death with his own! He is the most amusing and interesting person, in one of the most amusing and interesting books in the world, Boswell's Life of Johnson. His peach-coloured coat shall always bloom in Boswell's writings, and his fame survive in his own!—His genius was a mixture of originality and imitation: he could do nothing without some model before him, and he could copy nothing that he did not adorn with the graces of his own mind. Almost all the latter part of the Vicar of Wakefield, and a great deal of the former, is taken from Joseph Andrews; but the circumstances I have mentioned above are not.

The finest things he has left behind him in verse are his character of a country school-master, and that prophetic description of Burke in the Retaliation. His moral Essays in the Citizen of the World, are as agreeable chit-chat as can be conveyed in the form of didactic discourses.

Warton was a poet and a scholar, studious with ease, learned without affectation. He had a happiness which some have been prouder of than he, who deserved it less—he was poet-laureat.

> 'And that green wreath which decks the bard when dead,
> That laurel garland crown'd his living head.'

But he bore his honours meekly, and performed his half-yearly task regularly. I should not have mentioned him for this distinction alone (the highest which a poet can receive from the state), but for another circumstance; I mean his being the author of some of the finest sonnets in the language—at least so they appear to me; and as this species of composition has the necessary advantage of being short (though it is also sometimes both 'tedious and brief'), I will here repeat two or three of them, as treating pleasing subjects in a pleasing and philosophical way.

Written in a blank leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon

> 'Deem not, devoid of elegance, the sage,
> By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguil'd,
> Of painful pedantry the poring child;
> Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,

Now sunk by Time, and Henry's fiercer rage.
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smil'd
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts, on themes unclassic falsely styl'd,
Intent. While cloister'd piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictur'd stores.
Not rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers.'

Sonnet. Written at Stonehenge.

'Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle,
Whether, by Merlin's aid, from Scythia's shore
To Amber's fatal plain Pendragon bore,
Huge frame of giant hands, the mighty pile,
T' entomb his Britons slain by Hengist's guile:
Or Druid priests, sprinkled with human gore,
Taught mid thy massy maze their mystic lore:
Or Danish chiefs, enrich'd with savage spoil,
To victory's idol vast, an unhewn shrine,
Rear'd the rude heap, or in thy hallow'd ground
Repose the kings of Brutus' genuine line;
Or here those kings in solemn state were crown'd;
Studious to trace thy wondrous origin,
We muse on many an ancient tale renown'd.'

Nothing can be more admirable than the learning here displayed, or the inference from it, that it is of no use but as it leads to interesting thought and reflection.

That written after seeing Wilton House is in the same style, but I prefer concluding with that to the river Lodon, which has a personal as well as poetical interest about it.

'Ah! what a weary race my feet have run,
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crown'd,
And thought my way was all through fairy ground,
Beneath the azure sky and golden sun:
When first my Muse to lisp her notes begun!
While pensive memory traces back the round
Which fills the varied interval between;
Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.—
Sweet native stream! those skies and suns so pure
No more return, to cheer my evening road!
Yet still one joy remains, that not obscure
Nor useless, all my vacant days have flow'd
From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature,
Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestow'd.'

I have thus gone through all the names of this period I could think of, but I find that there are others still waiting behind that I had never thought of. Here is a list of some of them—Pattison, Tickell, Hill, Somerville, Browne, Pitt, Wilkie, Dodsley, Shaw, Smart, Langhorne, Bruce, Greame, Glover, Lovibond, Penrose, Mickle, Jago, Scott, Whitehead, Jenyns, Logan, Cotton, Cunningham, and Blacklock.—I think it will be best to let them pass and say nothing about them. It will be hard to persuade so many respectable persons that they are dull writers, and if we give them any praise, they will send others.

But here comes one whose claims cannot be so easily set aside: they have been sanctioned by learning, hailed by genius, and hallowed by misfortune—I mean Chatterton. Yet I must say what I think of him, and that is not what is generally thought. I pass over the disputes between the learned antiquaries, Dr. Mills, Herbert Croft, and Dr. Knox, whether he was to be placed after Shakspeare and Dryden, or to come after Shakspeare alone. A living poet has borne a better testimony to him—

> 'I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
> The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
> And him[1] who walked in glory and in joy
> Beside his plough along the mountain side.'

I am loth to put asunder whom so great an authority has joined together; but I cannot find in Chatterton's works any thing so extraordinary as the age at which they were written. They have a facility, vigour, and knowledge, which were prodigious in a boy of sixteen, but which would not have been so in a man of twenty. He did not shew extraordinary powers of genius, but extraordinary precocity. Nor do I believe he would have written better, had he lived. He knew this himself, or he would have lived. Great geniuses, like great kings, have too much to think of to kill themselves; for their mind to them also 'a kingdom is.' With an unaccountable power coming over him at an unusual age, and with the youthful confidence it inspired, he performed wonders, and was willing to set a seal on his reputation by a tragic catastrophe. He had done his best; and, like another Empedocles, threw himself into Ætna, to ensure immortality. The brazen slippers alone remain!—

[1] Burns.—These lines are taken from the introduction to Mr. Wordsworth's poem of the LEECH-GATHERER.

LECTURE VII

ON BURNS, AND THE OLD ENGLISH BALLADS

I AM sorry that what I said in the conclusion of the last Lecture respecting Chatterton, should have given dissatisfaction to some persons, with whom I would willingly agree on all such matters. What I meant was less to call in question Chatterton's genius, than to object to the common mode of estimating its magnitude by its prematureness. The lists of fame are not filled with the dates of births or deaths; and the side-mark of the age at which they were done, wears out in works destined for immortality. Had Chatterton really done more, we should have thought less of him, for our attention would then have been fixed on the excellence of the works themselves, instead of the singularity of the circumstances in which they were produced. But because he attained to the full powers of manhood at an early age, I do not see that he would have attained to more than those powers, had he lived to be a man. He was a prodigy, because in him the ordinary march of nature was violently precipitated; and it is therefore inferred, that he would have continued to hold on his course, 'unslacked of motion.' On the contrary, who knows but he might have lived to be poet-laureat? It is much better to let him remain as he was. Of his actual productions, any one may think as highly as he pleases; I would only guard against adding to the account of his *quantum meruit*, those possible productions by which the learned rhapodists of his time raised his gigantic pretensions to an equality with those of Homer and Shakspeare. It is amusing to read some of these exaggerated descriptions, each rising above the other in extravagance. In Anderson's Life, we find that Mr. Warton speaks of him 'as a prodigy of genius,' as 'a singular instance of prematurity of abilities': that may be true enough, and Warton was at any rate a competent judge; but Mr. Malone 'believes him to have been the greatest genius that England has produced since the days of Shakspeare.' Dr. Gregory says, 'he must rank, as a universal genius, above Dryden, and perhaps only second to Shakspeare.' Mr. Herbert Croft is still more unqualified in his praises; he asserts, that 'no such being, at any period of life, has ever been known, or possibly ever will be known.' He runs a parallel between Chatterton and Milton; and asserts, that 'an army of Macedonian and Swedish mad butchers fly before him,'

meaning, I suppose, that Alexander the Great and Charles the Twelfth were nothing to him; 'nor,' he adds, 'does my memory supply me with any human being, who at such an age, with such advantages, has produced such compositions. Under the heathen mythology, superstition and admiration would have explained all, by bringing Apollo on earth; nor would the God ever have descended with more credit to himself.'—Chatterton's physiognomy would at least have enabled him to pass *incognito*. It is quite different from the look of timid wonder and delight with which Annibal Caracci has painted a young Apollo listening to the first sounds he draws from a Pan's pipe, under the tutelage of the old Silenus! If Mr. Croft is sublime on the occasion, Dr. Knox is no less pathetic. 'The testimony of Dr. Knox,' says Dr. Anderson, (Essays, p. 144), 'does equal credit to the classical taste and amiable benevolence of the writer, and the genius and reputation of Chatterton.' 'When I read,' says the Doctor, 'the researches of those learned antiquaries who have endeavoured to prove that the poems attributed to Rowley were really written by him, I observe many ingenious remarks in confirmation of their opinion, which it would be tedious, if not difficult, to controvert.'

Now this is so far from the mark, that the whole controversy might have been settled by any one but the learned antiquaries themselves, who had the smallest share of their learning, from this single circumstance, that the poems read as smooth as any modern poems, if you read them as modern compositions; and that you cannot read them, or make verse of them at all, if you pronounce or accent the words as they were spoken at the time when the poems were pretended to have been written. The whole secret of the imposture, which nothing but a deal of learned dust, raised by collecting and removing a great deal of learned rubbish, could have prevented our laborious critics from seeing through, lies on the face of it (to say nothing of the burlesque air which is scarcely disguised throughout) in the repetition of a few obsolete words, and in the mis-spelling of common ones.

'No sooner,' proceeds the Doctor, 'do I turn to the poems, than the labour of the antiquaries appears only waste of time; and I am involuntarily forced to join in placing that laurel, which he seems so well to have deserved, on the brow of Chatterton. The poems bear so many marks of superior genius, that they have deservedly excited the general attention of polite scholars, and are considered as the most remarkable productions in modern poetry. We have many instances of poetical eminence at an early age; but neither Cowley, Milton, nor Pope, ever produced any thing while they were boys,

which can justly be compared to the poems of Chatterton. The learned antiquaries do not indeed dispute their excellence. They extol it in the highest terms of applause. They raise their favourite Rowley to a rivalry with Homer: but they make the very merits of the works an argument against their real author. Is it possible, say they, that a boy should produce compositions so beautiful and masterly? That a common boy should produce them is not possible,' rejoins the Doctor; 'but that they should be produced by a boy of an extraordinary genius, such as was that of Homer or Shakspeare, though a prodigy, is such a one as by no means exceeds the bounds of rational credibility.'

Now it does not appear that Shakspeare or Homer were such early prodigies; so that by this reasoning he must take precedence of them too, as well as of Milton, Cowley, and Pope. The reverend and classical writer then breaks out into the following melancholy raptures:—

'Unfortunate boy! short and evil were thy days, but thy fame shall be immortal. Hadst thou been known to the munificent patrons of genius. . . .

'Unfortunate boy! poorly wast thou accommodated during thy short sojourning here among us;—rudely wast thou treated—sorely did thy feelings suffer from the scorn of the unworthy; and there are at last those who wish to rob thee of thy only meed, thy posthumous glory. Severe too are the censures of thy morals. In the gloomy moments of despondency, I fear thou hast uttered impious and blasphemous thoughts. But let thy more rigid censors reflect, that thou wast literally and strictly but a boy. Let many of thy bitterest enemies reflect what were their own religious principles, and whether they had any at the age of fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. Surely it is a severe and unjust surmise that thou wouldst probably have ended thy life as a victim to the laws, if thou hadst not ended it as thou didst.'

Enough, enough, of the learned antiquaries, and of the classical and benevolent testimony of Dr. Knox. Chatterton was, indeed, badly enough off; but he was at least saved from the pain and shame of reading this woful lamentation over fallen genius, which circulates splendidly bound in the fourteenth edition, while he is a prey to worms. As to those who are really capable of admiring Chatterton's genius, or of feeling an interest in his fate, I would only say, that I never heard any one speak of any one of his works as if it were an old well-known favourite, and had become a faith and a religion in his mind. It is his name, his youth, and what he might have lived to have done, that excite our wonder and admiration. He has the same

sort of posthumous fame that an actor of the last age has—an abstracted reputation which is independent of any thing we know of his works. The admirers of Collins never think of him without recalling to their minds his Ode on Evening, or on the Poetical Character. Gray's Elegy, and his poetical popularity, are identified together, and inseparable even in imagination. It is the same with respect to Burns: when you speak of him as a poet, you mean his works, his Tam o' Shanter, or his Cotter's Saturday Night. But the enthusiasts for Chatterton, if you ask for the proofs of his extraordinary genius, are obliged to turn to the volume, and perhaps find there what they seek; but it is not in their minds; and it is of *that* I spoke.

The Minstrel's song in Ælla is I think the best.

'O! synge untoe my roundelaie,
O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee,
Daunce ne moe atte hallie daie,
Lycke a rennynge ryver bee.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Black hys cryne as the wyntere nyght,
Whyte hys rode as the sommer snowe,
Rodde hys face as the mornynge lyghte,
Cale he lyes ynne the grave belowe.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Swote hys tongue as the throstles note,
Quycke ynne daunce as thought cann bee,
Defte his taboure, codgelle stote,
O! hee lys bie the wyllowe-tree.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Harke! the ravenne flappes hys wynge,
In the briered dell belowe;
Harke! the dethe-owle loude dothe synge,
To the nygthe-mares as theie goe.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

See! the whyte moone sheenes onne hie;
Whyterre ys mie true loves shroude;

Whyterre yanne the mornynge skie,
Whyterre yanne the evenynge cloude.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree,

Heere, upon mie true loves grave,
Schalle the baren fleurs be layde,
Ne one hallie seyncte to save
Al the celness of a mayde.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to his deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Wythe mie hondes I 'll dent the brieres
Rounde hys hallie corse to gre,
Ouphante fairies, lyghte your fyres,
Heere mie boddie stille schalle bee.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Comme, wythe acorne-coppe and thorne,
Drayne my hartys blodde awaie ;
Lyfe and all yttes goode I scorne,
Daunce bie nete, or feaste by daie.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe-tree.

Water wytches, crownede wythe reytes,
Bere mee to yer leathalle tyde.
I die ; I comme ; mie true love waytes.
Thos the damselle spake, and dyed.'

To proceed to the more immediate subject of the present Lecture, the character and writings of Burns.—Shakspeare says of some one, that 'he was like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring.' Burns, the poet, was not such a man. He had a strong mind, and a strong body, the fellow to it. He had a real heart of flesh and blood beating in his bosom—you can almost hear it throb. Some one said, that if you had shaken hands with him, his hand would have burnt yours. The Gods, indeed, 'made him poetical'; but nature had a hand in him first. His heart was in the right place. He did not 'create a soul under the ribs of death,' by tinkling siren sounds, or by piling up centos of poetic diction ; but for the artificial flowers of poetry, he plucked the mountain-daisy under his feet ; and a field-mouse, hurrying from its ruined dwelling, could inspire him

with the sentiments of terror and pity. He held the plough or the pen with the same firm, manly grasp; nor did he cut out poetry as we cut out watch-papers, with finical dexterity, nor from the same flimsy materials. Burns was not like Shakspeare in the range of his genius; but there is something of the same magnanimity, directness, and unaffected character about him. He was not a sickly sentimentalist, a namby-pamby poet, a mincing metre ballad-monger, any more than Shakspeare. He would as soon hear 'a brazen candlestick tuned, or a dry wheel grate on the axletree.' He was as much of a man—not a twentieth part as much of a poet as Shakspeare. With but little of his imagination or inventive power, he had the same life of mind: within the narrow circle of personal feeling or domestic incidents, the pulse of his poetry flows as healthily and vigorously. He had an eye to see; a heart to feel:—no more. His pictures of good fellowship, of social glee, of quaint humour, are equal to any thing; they come up to nature, and they cannot go beyond it. The sly jest collected in his laughing eye at the sight of the grotesque and ludicrous in manners—the large tear rolled down his manly cheek at the sight of another's distress. He has made us as well acquainted with himself as it is possible to be; has let out the honest impulses of his native disposition, the unequal conflict of the passions in his breast, with the same frankness and truth of description. His strength is not greater than his weakness: his virtues were greater than his vices. His virtues belonged to his genius: his vices to his situation, which did not correspond to his genius.

It has been usual to attack Burns's moral character, and the moral tendency of his writings at the same time; and Mr. Wordsworth, in a letter to Mr. Gray, Master of the High School at Edinburgh, in attempting to defend, has only laid him open to a more serious and unheard-of responsibility. Mr. Gray might very well have sent him back, in return for his epistle, the answer of Holofernes in Love's Labour's Lost:—'*Via* goodman Dull, thou hast spoken no word all this while.' The author of this performance, which is as weak in effect as it is pompous in pretension, shews a great dislike of Robespierre, Buonaparte, and of Mr. Jeffrey, whom he, by some unaccountable fatality, classes together as the three most formidable enemies of the human race that have appeared in his (Mr. Wordsworth's) remembrance; but he betrays very little liking to Burns. He is, indeed, anxious to get him out of the unhallowed clutches of the Edinburgh Reviewers (as a mere matter of poetical privilege), only to bring him before a graver and higher tribunal, which is his own; and after repeating and insinuating ponderous charges against him, shakes his head, and declines giving any opinion in so tremendous

a case; so that though the judgment of the former critic is set aside, poor Burns remains just where he was, and nobody gains any thing by the cause but Mr. Wordsworth, in an increasing opinion of his own wisdom and purity. 'Out upon this half-faced fellowship!' The author of the Lyrical Ballads has thus missed a fine opportunity of doing Burns justice and himself honour. He might have shewn himself a philosophical prose-writer, as well as a philosophical poet. He might have offered as amiable and as gallant a defence of the Muses, as my uncle Toby, in the honest simplicity of his heart, did of the army. He might have said at once, instead of making a parcel of wry faces over the matter, that Burns had written Tam o' Shanter, and that that alone was enough; that he could hardly have described the excesses of mad, hairbrained, roaring mirth and convivial indulgence, which are the soul of it, if he himself had not 'drunk full ofter of the ton than of the well'—unless 'the act and practique part of life had been the mistress of his theorique.' Mr. Wordsworth might have quoted such lines as—

> 'The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
> Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious';—

or,

> 'Care, mad to see a man so happy,
> E'en drown'd himself among the nappy';

and fairly confessed that he could not have written such lines from a want of proper habits and previous sympathy; and that till some great puritanical genius should arise to do these things equally well without any knowledge of them, the world might forgive Burns the injuries he had done his health and fortune in his poetical apprenticeship to experience, for the pleasure he had afforded them. Instead of this, Mr. Wordsworth hints, that with different personal habits and greater strength of mind, Burns would have written differently, and almost as well as *he* does. He might have taken that line of Gay's,

> 'The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets,'—

and applied it in all its force and pathos to the poetical character. He might have argued that poets are men of genius, and that a man of genius is not a machine; that they live in a state of intellectual intoxication, and that it is too much to expect them to be distinguished by peculiar *sang froid*, circumspection, and sobriety. Poets are by nature men of stronger imagination and keener sensibilities than others; and it is a contradiction to suppose them at the same time governed only by the cool, dry, calculating dictates of reason and foresight. Mr. Wordsworth might have ascertained the boundaries that part the

provinces of reason and imagination:—that it is the business of the understanding to exhibit things in their relative proportions and ultimate consequences—of the imagination to insist on their immediate impressions, and to indulge their strongest impulses; but it is the poet's office to pamper the imagination of his readers and his own with the extremes of present ecstacy or agony, to snatch the swift-winged golden minutes, the torturing hour, and to banish the dull, prosaic, monotonous realities of life, both from his thoughts and from his practice. Mr. Wordsworth might have shewn how it is that all men of genius, or of originality and independence of mind, are liable to practical errors, from the very confidence their superiority inspires, which makes them fly in the face of custom and prejudice, always rashly, sometimes unjustly; for, after all, custom and prejudice are not without foundation in truth and reason, and no one individual is a match for the world in power, very few in knowledge. The world may altogether be set down as older and wiser than any single person in it.

Again, our philosophical letter-writer might have enlarged on the temptations to which Burns was exposed from his struggles with fortune and the uncertainty of his fate. He might have shewn how a poet, not born to wealth or title, was kept in a constant state of feverish anxiety with respect to his fame and the means of a precarious livelihood: that 'from being chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, he had passed into the sunshine of fortune, and was lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour'; yet even there could not count on the continuance of success, but was, 'like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!' He might have traced his habit of ale-house tippling to the last long precious draught of his favourite usquebaugh, which he took in the prospect of bidding farewel for ever to his native land; and his conjugal infidelities to his first disappointment in love, which would not have happened to him, if he had been born to a small estate in land, or bred up behind a counter!

Lastly, Mr. Wordsworth might have shewn the incompatibility between the Muses and the Excise, which never agreed well together, or met in one seat, till they were unaccountably reconciled on Rydal Mount. He must know (no man better) the distraction created by the opposite calls of business and of fancy, the torment of extents, the plague of receipts laid in order or mislaid, the disagreeableness of exacting penalties or paying the forfeiture; and how all this (together with the broaching of casks and the splashing of beer-barrels) must have preyed upon a mind like Burns, with more than his natural sensibility and none of his acquired firmness.

Mr. Coleridge, alluding to this circumstance of the promotion of the Scottish Bard to be 'a gauger of ale-firkins,' in a poetical epistle to his friend Charles Lamb, calls upon him in a burst of heartfelt indignation, to gather a wreath of henbane, nettles, and nightshade,

'—— ——To twine
The illustrious brow of Scotch nobility.'

If, indeed, Mr. Lamb had undertaken to write a letter in defence of Burns, how different would it have been from this of Mr. Wordsworth's! How much better than I can even imagine it to have been done!

It is hardly reasonable to look for a hearty or genuine defence of Burns from the pen of Mr. Wordsworth; for there is no common link of sympathy between them. Nothing can be more different or hostile than the spirit of their poetry. Mr. Wordsworth's poetry is the poetry of mere sentiment and pensive contemplation: Burns's is a very highly sublimated essence of animal existence. With Burns, 'self-love and social are the same'—

'And we 'll tak a cup of kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.'

Mr. Wordsworth is 'himself alone,' a recluse philosopher, or a reluctant spectator of the scenes of many-coloured life; moralising on them, not describing, not entering into them. Robert Burns has exerted all the vigour of his mind, all the happiness of his nature, in exalting the pleasures of wine, of love, and good fellowship: but in Mr. Wordsworth there is a total disunion and divorce of the faculties of the mind from those of the body; the banns are forbid, or a separation is austerely pronounced from bed and board—*a mensâ et thoro*. From the Lyrical Ballads, it does not appear that men eat or drink, marry or are given in marriage. If we lived by every sentiment that proceeded out of mouths, and not by bread or wine, or if the species were continued like trees (to borrow an expression from the great Sir Thomas Brown), Mr. Wordsworth's poetry would be just as good as ever. It is not so with Burns: he is 'famous for the keeping of it up,' and in his verse is ever fresh and gay. For this, it seems, he has fallen under the displeasure of the Edinburgh Reviewers, and the still more formidable patronage of Mr. Wordsworth's pen.

'This, this was the unkindest cut of all.'

I was going to give some extracts out of this composition in

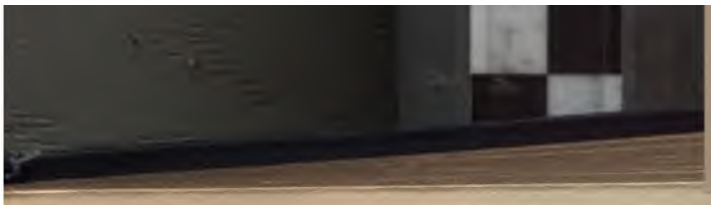
support of what I have said, but I find them too tedious. Indeed (if I may be allowed to speak my whole mind, under correction) Mr. Wordsworth could not be in any way expected to tolerate or give a favourable interpretation to Burns's constitutional foibles—even his best virtues are not good enough for him. He is repelled and driven back into himself, not less by the worth than by the faults of others. His taste is as exclusive and repugnant as his genius. It is because so few things give him pleasure, that he gives pleasure to so few people. It is not every one who can perceive the sublimity of a daisy, or the pathos to be extracted from a withered thorn!

To proceed from Burns's patrons to his poetry, than which no two things can be more different. His 'Twa Dogs' is a very spirited piece of description, both as it respects the animal and human creation, and conveys a very vivid idea of the manners both of high and low life. The burlesque panegyric of the first dog,

> 'His locked, lettered, braw brass collar
> Shew'd him the gentleman and scholar'—

reminds one of Launce's account of his dog Crabbe, where he is said, as an instance of his being in the way of promotion, 'to have got among three or four gentleman-like dogs under the Duke's table.' The 'Halloween' is the most striking and picturesque description of local customs and scenery. The Brigs of Ayr, the Address to a Haggis, Scotch Drink, and innumerable others are, however, full of the same kind of characteristic and comic painting. But his master-piece in this way is his Tam o' Shanter. I shall give the beginning of it, but I am afraid I shall hardly know when to leave off.

> 'When chapman billies leave the street,
> And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
> As market-days are wearing late,
> And folk begin to tak the gate;
> While we sit bousing at the nappy,
> And getting fou and unco happy,
> We think na on the lang Scots miles,
> The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,
> That lie between us and our hame,
> Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
> Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
> Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.
>
> This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,
> As he frae Ayr ae night did canter;
> (Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
> For honest men and bonny lasses.)



ON BURNS, AND THE OLD ENGLISH BALLADS

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October
Ae market-day thou was na sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirton Jean till Monday—
She prophesy'd, that late or soon,
Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catcht wi' warlocks in the mirk,
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs an clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious
Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious:
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy;
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills of life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r—its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow, falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;

Or like the Borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time or tide,
The hour approaches, Tam maun ride;
That hour o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in,
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling showers rose on the blast,
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd,
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
That night a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles haulding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glowring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—

By this time Tam was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken Charlie brak 's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.—
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
Whan, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' Tippenny, we fear nae evil,
Wi' Usqueba, we 'll face the devil!

The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na de'ils a boddle.
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light,
And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance,
Nae light cotillion new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
As winnock-bunker, in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A touzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge;
He screw'd the pipes, and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl—
Coffins stood round like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And, by some devilish cantrip slight,
Each in its cauld hand held a light—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet-airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red rusted;
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair, o' horrible and awfu',
Which e'en to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The Piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka Carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans
A' plump and strapping in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hundred linen!

Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!
But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Louping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder did na turn thy stomach.

But Tam ken'd what was what fu' brawly,
There was ae winsome wench and waly,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after ken'd on Carrick shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear—)
Her cutty sark o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vaunty.—
Ah! little ken'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her power:
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was, and strang)
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Ev'n Satan glowr'd and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch't, and blew wi' might and main;
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty Sark!'
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees biz out wi' angry fyke
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager rins the market-crowd,
When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
So Maggie rins—the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skreech and hollow,

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou 'll get thy fairin'!
In hell they 'll roast thee like a herrin'!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!
Kate soon will be a waefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane o' the brig;
There, at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross;
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind, her ain grey tail:
The Carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son tak heed:
Whane'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or Cutty Sarks rin in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys owre dear;
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.'

Burns has given the extremes of licentious eccentricity and convivial enjoyment, in the story of this scape-grace, and of patriarchal simplicity and gravity in describing the old national character of the Scottish peasantry. The Cotter's Saturday Night is a noble and pathetic picture of human manners, mingled with a fine religious awe. It comes over the mind like a slow and solemn strain of music. The soul of the poet aspires from this scene of low-thoughted care, and reposes, in trembling hope, on 'the bosom of its Father and its God.' Hardly any thing can be more touching than the following stanzas, for instance, whether as they describe human interests, or breathe a lofty devotional spirit.

'The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise and glee.

His wee-bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
  His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
  Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
  At service out, amang the farmers roun',
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
  A cannie errand to a neebor town;
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
  In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
  Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
  An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers;
The social hours, swift-winged, unnotic'd fleet;
  Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears:
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
  Anticipation forward points the view;
The mither, wi' her needle an' her shears,
  Gars auld claes look amaist as weel 's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

* * * * * * *

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
  Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,
  To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
  Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
  While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears it 's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
  A strappan youth; he taks the mother's eye;
Blithe Jenny sees the visit 's no ill ta'en;
  The father craks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
  But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
  What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn 's respected like the lave.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
  The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food:

The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
An' aft he 's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion wi' judicious care;
And 'Let us worship God!' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name;
Or noble Elgin beets the heav'n-ward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.'—

Burns's poetical epistles to his friends are admirable, whether for the touches of satire, the painting of character, or the sincerity of friendship they display. Those to Captain Grose, and to Davie, a brother poet, are among the best:—they are 'the true pathos and sublime of human life.' His prose-letters are sometimes tinctured with affectation. They seem written by a man who has been admired for his wit, and is expected on all occasions to shine. Those in which he expresses his ideas of natural beauty in reference to Alison's Essay on Taste, and advocates the keeping up the remembrances of old customs and seasons, are the most powerfully written. His English serious odes and moral stanzas are, in general, failures, such as the The Lament, Man was made to Mourn, &c. nor do I much admire his 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.' In this strain of didactic or sentimental moralising, the lines to Glencairn are the most happy, and impressive. His imitations of the old humorous ballad style of Ferguson's songs are no whit inferior to the admirable originals, such as 'John Anderson, my Joe,' and many more. But of all his productions, the pathetic and serious love-songs which he

has left behind him, in the manner of the old ballads, are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to Mary Morison, and those entitled Jessy.

'Here 's a health to ane I lo'e dear—
Here 's a health to ane I lo'e dear—
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!'

The conclusion of the other is as follows.

'Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw.
Tho' this was fair, and that was bra',
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sighed and said among them a',
Ye are na' Mary Morison.'

That beginning, 'Oh gin my love were a bonny red rose,' is a piece of rich and fantastic description. One would think that nothing could surpass these in beauty of expression, and in true pathos: and nothing does or can, but some of the old Scotch ballads themselves. There is in them a still more original cast of thought, a more romantic imagery—the thistle's glittering down, the gilliflower on the old garden-wall, the horseman's silver bells, the hawk on its perch—a closer intimacy with nature, a firmer reliance on it, as the only stock of wealth which the mind has to resort to, a more infantine simplicity of manners, a greater strength of affection, hopes longer cherished and longer deferred, sighs that the heart dare hardly heave, and 'thoughts that often lie too deep for tears.' We seem to feel that those who wrote and sung them (the early minstrels) lived in the open air, wandering on from place to place with restless feet and thoughts, and lending an ever-open ear to the fearful accidents of war or love, floating on the breath of old tradition or common fame, and moving the strings of their harp with sounds that sank into a nation's heart. How fine an illustration of this is that passage in Don Quixote, where the knight and Sancho, going in search of Dulcinea, inquire their way of the countryman, who was driving his mules to plough before break of day, 'singing the ancient ballad of Ronces-

valles.' Sir Thomas Overbury describes his country girl as still accompanied with fragments of old songs. One of the best and most striking descriptions of the effects of this mixture of national poetry and music is to be found in one of the letters of Archbishop Herring, giving an account of a confirmation-tour in the mountains of Wales.

'That pleasure over, our work became very arduous, for we were to mount a rock, and in many places of the road, over natural stairs of stone. I submitted to this, which they told me was but a taste of the country, and to prepare me for worse things to come. However, worse things did not come that morning, for we dined soon after out of our own wallets; and though our inn stood in a place of the most frightful solitude, and the best formed for the habitation of monks (who once possessed it) in the world, yet we made a cheerful meal. The novelty of the thing gave me spirits, and the air gave me appetite much keener than the knife I ate with. We had our music too; for there came in a harper, who soon drew about us a group of figures that Hogarth would have given any price for. The harper was in his true place and attitude; a man and woman stood before him, singing to his instrument wildly, but not disagreeably; a little dirty child was playing with the bottom of the harp; a woman in a sick night-cap hanging over the stairs; a boy with crutches fixed in a staring attention, and a girl carding wool in the chimney, and rocking a cradle with her naked feet, interrupted in her business by the charms of the music; all ragged and dirty, and all silently attentive. These figures gave us a most entertaining picture, and would please you or any man of observation; and one reflection gave me a particular comfort, that the assembly before us demonstrated, that even here, the influential sun warmed poor mortals, and inspired them with love and music.'

I could wish that Mr. Wilkie had been recommended to take this group as the subject of his admirable pencil; he has painted a picture of Bathsheba, instead.

In speaking of the old Scotch ballads, I need do no more than mention the name of Auld Robin Gray. The effect of reading this old ballad is as if all our hopes and fears hung upon the last fibre of the heart, and we felt that giving way. What silence, what loneliness, what leisure for grief and despair!

'My father pressed me sair,
Though my mother did na' speak;
But she looked in my face
Till my heart was like to break.'

The irksomeness of the situations, the sense of painful dependence, is excessive; and yet the sentiment of deep-rooted, patient affection triumphs over all, and is the only impression that remains. Lady

Ann Bothwell's Lament is not, I think, quite equal to the lines beginning—

'O waly, waly, up the bank,
And waly, waly, down the brae,
And waly, waly, yon burn side,
Where I and my love wont to gae.
I leant my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree;
But first it bow'd, and syne it brak,
Sae my true-love 's forsaken me.

O waly, waly, love is bonny,
A little time while it is new;
But when its auld, it waxeth cauld,
And fades awa' like the morning dew.
When cockle-shells turn siller bells,
And muscles grow on every tree,
Whan frost and snaw sall warm us aw,
Then sall my love prove true to me.

Now Arthur seat sall be my bed,
The sheets sall ne'er be fyld by me:
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink,
Since my true-love 's forsaken me.
Martinmas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
O gentle death, whan wilt thou cum,
And tak' a life that wearies me!

'Tis not the frost that freezes sae,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie,
'Tis not sic cauld, that makes me cry,
But my love's heart grown cauld to me.
Whan we came in by Glasgow town,
We were a comely sight to see,
My love was clad in black velvet,
And I myself in cramasie.

But had I wist before I kist,
That love had been sae hard to win;
I 'd lockt my heart in case of gowd,
And pinn'd it with a siller pin.
And oh! if my poor babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I mysel in the cold grave!
Since my true-love 's forsaken me.'

The finest modern imitation of this style is the Braes of Yarrow; and perhaps the finest subject for a story of the same kind in any

modern book, is that told in Turner's History of England, of a Mahometan woman, who having fallen in love with an English merchant, the father of Thomas à Becket, followed him all the way to England, knowing only the word London, and the name of her lover, Gilbert.

But to have done with this, which is rather too serious a subject.—The old English ballads are of a gayer and more lively turn. They are adventurous and romantic; but they relate chiefly to good living and good fellowship, to drinking and hunting scenes. Robin Hood is the chief of these, and he still, in imagination, haunts Sherwood Forest. The archers green glimmer under the waving branches; the print on the grass remains where they have just finished their noon-tide meal under the green-wood tree; and the echo of their bugle-horn and twanging bows resounds through the tangled mazes of the forest, as the tall slim deer glances startled by.

'The trees in Sherwood Forest are old and good;
The grass beneath them now is dimly green:
Are they deserted all? Is no young mien,
With loose-slung bugle, met within the wood?

No arrow found—foil'd of its antler'd food—
Struck in the oak's rude side?—Is there nought seen
To mark the revelries which there have been,
In the sweet days of merry Robin Hood?

Go there with summer, and with evening—go
In the soft shadows, like some wand'ring man—
And thou shalt far amid the forest know
The archer-men in green, with belt and bow,
Feasting on pheasant, river-fowl and swan,
With Robin at their head, and Marian.'[1]

LECTURE VIII

ON THE LIVING POETS

'No more of talk where God or Angel guest
With man, as with his friend, familiar us'd
To sit indulgent.'———

GENIUS is the heir of fame; but the hard condition on which the bright reversion must be earned is the loss of life. Fame is the recompense not of the living, but of the dead. The temple of fame

[1] Sonnet on Sherwood Forest, by J. H. Reynolds, Esq.

stands upon the grave: the flame that burns upon its altars is kindled from the ashes of great men. Fame itself is immortal, but it is not begot till the breath of genius is extinguished. For fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude, the idle buzz of fashion, the venal puff, the soothing flattery of favour or of friendship; but it is the spirit of a man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of other men, undying and imperishable. It is the power which the intellect exercises over the intellect, and the lasting homage which is paid to it, as such, independently of time and circumstances, purified from partiality and evil-speaking. Fame is the sound which the stream of high thoughts, carried down to future ages, makes as it flows —deep, distant, murmuring evermore like the waters of the mighty ocean. He who has ears truly touched to this music, is in a manner deaf to the voice of popularity.—The love of fame differs from mere vanity in this, that the one is immediate and personal, the other ideal and abstracted. It is not the direct and gross homage paid to himself, that the lover of true fame seeks or is proud of; but the indirect and pure homage paid to the eternal forms of truth and beauty as they are reflected in his mind, that gives him confidence and hope. The love of nature is the first thing in the mind of the true poet: the admiration of himself the last. A man of genius cannot well be a coxcomb; for his mind is too full of other things to be much occupied with his own person. He who is conscious of great powers in himself, has also a high standard of excellence with which to compare his efforts: he appeals also to a test and judge of merit, which is the highest, but which is too remote, grave, and impartial, to flatter his self-love extravagantly, or puff him up with intolerable and vain conceit. This, indeed, is one test of genius and of real greatness of mind, whether a man can wait patiently and calmly for the award of posterity, satisfied with the unwearied exercise of his faculties, retired within the sanctuary of his own thoughts; or whether he is eager to forestal his own immortality, and mortgage it for a newspaper puff. He who thinks much of himself, will be in danger of being forgotten by the rest of the world: he who is always trying to lay violent hands on reputation, will not secure the best and most lasting. If the restless candidate for praise takes no pleasure, no sincere and heartfelt delight in his works, but as they are admired and applauded by others, what should others see in them to admire or applaud? They cannot be expected to admire them because they are *his*; but for the truth and nature contained in them, which must first be inly felt and copied with severe delight, from the love of truth and nature, before it can ever appear there. Was Raphael, think you, when he painted his pictures of the Virgin and Child in all their inconceivable

truth and beauty of expression, thinking most of his subject or of himself? Do you suppose that Titian, when he painted a landscape, was pluming himself on being thought the finest colourist in the world, or making himself so by looking at nature? Do you imagine that Shakspeare, when he wrote Lear or Othello, was thinking of any thing but Lear and Othello? Or that Mr. Kean, when he plays these characters, is thinking of the audience?—No: he who would be great in the eyes of others, must first learn to be nothing in his own. The love of fame, as it enters at times into his mind, is only another name for the love of excellence; or it is the ambition to attain the highest excellence, sanctioned by the highest authority—that of time.

Those minds, then, which are the most entitled to expect it, can best put up with the postponement of their claims to lasting fame. They can afford to wait. They are not afraid that truth and nature will ever wear out; will lose their gloss with novelty, or their effect with fashion. If their works have the seeds of immortality in them, they will live; if they have not, they care little about them as theirs. They do not complain of the start which others have got of them in the race of everlasting renown, or of the impossibility of attaining the honours which time alone can give, during the term of their natural lives. They know that no applause, however loud and violent, can anticipate or over-rule the judgment of posterity; that the opinion of no one individual, nor of any one generation, can have the weight, the authority (to say nothing of the force of sympathy and prejudice), which must belong to that of successive generations. The brightest living reputation cannot be equally imposing to the imagination, with that which is covered and rendered venerable with the hoar of innumerable ages. No modern production can have the same atmosphere of sentiment around it, as the remains of classical antiquity. But then our moderns may console themselves with the reflection, that they will be old in their turn, and will either be remembered with still increasing honours, or quite forgotten!

I would speak of the living poets as I have spoken of the dead (for I think highly of many of them); but I cannot speak of them with the same reverence, because I do not feel it; with the same confidence, because I cannot have the same authority to sanction my opinion. I cannot be absolutely certain that any body, twenty years hence, will think any thing about any of them; but we may be pretty sure that Milton and Shakspeare will be remembered twenty years hence. We are, therefore, not without excuse if we husband our enthusiasm a little, and do not prematurely lay out our whole stock in untried ventures, and what may turn out to be false bottoms. I

have myself out-lived one generation of favourite poets, the Darwins, the Hayleys, the Sewards. Who reads them now?—If, however, I have not the verdict of posterity to bear me out in bestowing the most unqualified praises on their immediate successors, it is also to be remembered, that neither does it warrant me in condemning them. Indeed, it was not my wish to go into this ungrateful part of the subject; but something of the sort is expected from me, and I must run the gauntlet as well as I can. Another circumstance that adds to the difficulty of doing justice to all parties is, that I happen to have had a personal acquaintance with some of these jealous votaries of the Muses; and that is not the likeliest way to imbibe a high opinion of the rest. Poets do not praise one another in the language of hyperbole. I am afraid, therefore, that I labour under a degree of prejudice against some of the most popular poets of the day, from an early habit of deference to the critical opinions of some of the least popular. I cannot say that I ever learnt much about Shakspeare or Milton, Spenser or Chaucer, from these professed guides; for I never heard them say much about them. They were always talking of themselves and one another. Nor am I certain that this sort of personal intercourse with living authors, while it takes away all real relish or freedom of opinion with regard to their contemporaries, greatly enhances our respect for themselves. Poets are not ideal beings; but have their prose-sides, like the commonest of the people. We often hear persons say, What they would have given to have seen Shakspeare! For my part, I would give a great deal not to have seen him; at least, if he was at all like any body else that I have ever seen. But why should he; for his works are not! This is, doubtless, one great advantage which the dead have over the living. It is always fortunate for ourselves and others, when we are prevented from exchanging admiration for knowledge. The splendid vision that in youth haunts our idea of the poetical character, fades, upon acquaintance, into the light of common day; as the azure tints that deck the mountain's brow are lost on a nearer approach to them. It is well, according to the moral of one of the Lyrical Ballads,—'To leave Yarrow unvisited.' But to leave this 'face-making,' and begin.—

I am a great admirer of the female writers of the present day; they appear to me like so many modern Muses. I could be in love with Mrs. Inchbald, romantic with Mrs. Radcliffe, and sarcastic with Madame D'Arblay: but they are novel-writers, and, like Audrey, may 'thank the Gods for not having made them poetical.' Did any one here ever read Mrs. Leicester's School? If they have not, I wish they would; there will be just time before the next three

volumes of the Tales of My Landlord come out. That is not a school of affectation, but of humanity. No one can think too highly of the work, or highly enough of the author.

The first poetess I can recollect is Mrs. Barbauld, with whose works I became acquainted before those of any other author, male or female, when I was learning to spell words of one syllable in her story-books for children. I became acquainted with her poetical works long after in Enfield's Speaker; and remember being much divided in my opinion at that time, between her Ode to Spring and Collins's Ode to Evening. I wish I could repay my childish debt of gratitude in terms of appropriate praise. She is a very pretty poetess; and, to my fancy, strews the flowers of poetry most agreeably round the borders of religious controversy. She is a neat and pointed prose-writer. Her 'Thoughts on the Inconsistency of Human Expectations,' is one of the most ingenious and sensible essays in the language. There is the same idea in one of Barrow's Sermons.

Mrs. Hannah More is another celebrated modern poetess, and I believe still living. She has written a great deal which I have never read.

Miss Baillie must make up this trio of female poets. Her tragedies and comedies, one of each to illustrate each of the passions, separately from the rest, are heresies in the dramatic art. She is a Unitarian in poetry. With her the passions are, like the French republic, one and indivisible: they are not so in nature, or in Shakspeare. Mr. Southey has, I believe, somewhere expressed an opinion, that the Basil of Miss Baillie is superior to Romeo and Juliet. I shall not stay to contradict him. On the other hand, I prefer her De Montfort, which was condemned on the stage, to some later tragedies, which have been more fortunate—to the Remorse, Bertram, and lastly, Fazio. There is in the chief character of that play a nerve, a continued unity of interest, a setness of purpose and precision of outline which John Kemble alone was capable of giving; and there is all the grace which women have in writing. In saying that De Montfort was a character which just suited Mr. Kemble, I mean to pay a compliment to both. He was not 'a man of no mark or likelihood': and what he could be supposed to do particularly well, must have a meaning in it. As to the other tragedies just mentioned, there is no reason why any common actor should not 'make mouths in them at the invisible event,'—one as well as another. Having thus expressed my sense of the merits of the authoress, I must add, that her comedy of the Election, performed last summer at the Lyceum with indifferent success, appears to me the perfection of baby-house theatricals. Every thing in it has such a *do-me-good* air, is so insipid

and amiable. Virtue seems such a pretty playing at make-believe, and vice is such a naughty word. It is a theory of some French author, that little girls ought not to be suffered to have dolls to play with, to call them *pretty dears*, to admire their black eyes and cherry cheeks, to lament and bewail over them if they fall down and hurt their faces, to praise them when they are good, and scold them when they are naughty. It is a school of affectation: Miss Baillie has profited of it. She treats her grown men and women as little girls treat their dolls—makes moral puppets of them, pulls the wires, and they talk virtue and act vice, according to their cue and the title prefixed to each comedy or tragedy, not from any real passions of their own, or love either of virtue or vice.

The transition from these to Mr. Rogers's Pleasures of Memory, is not far: he is a very lady-like poet. He is an elegant, but feeble writer. He wraps up obvious thoughts in a glittering cover of fine words; is full of enigmas with no meaning to them; is studiously inverted, and scrupulously far-fetched; and his verses are poetry, chiefly because no particle, line, or syllable of them reads like prose. He differs from Milton in this respect, who is accused of having inserted a number of prosaic lines in Paradise Lost. This kind of poetry, which is a more minute and inoffensive species of the Della Cruscan, is like the game of asking what one's thoughts are like. It is a tortuous, tottering, wriggling, fidgetty translation of every thing from the vulgar tongue, into all the tantalizing, teasing, tripping, lisping *mimminee-pimminee* of the highest brilliancy and fashion of poetical diction. You have nothing like truth of nature or simplicity of expression. The fastidious and languid reader is never shocked by meeting, from the rarest chance in the world, with a single homely phrase or intelligible idea. You cannot see the thought for the ambiguity of the language, the figure for the finery, the picture for the varnish. The whole is refined, and frittered away into an appearance of the most evanescent brilliancy and tremulous imbecility.—There is no other fault to be found with the Pleasures of Memory, than a want of taste and genius. The sentiments are amiable, and the notes at the end highly interesting, particularly the one relating to the Countess Pillar (as it is called) between Appleby and Penrith, erected (as the inscription tells the thoughtful traveller) by Anne Countess of Pembroke, in the year 1648, in memory of her last parting with her good and pious mother in the same place in the year 1616.

> 'To shew that power of love, how great
> Beyond all human estimate.'

This story is also told in the poem, but with so many artful innuendos and tinsel words, that it is hardly intelligible; and still less does it reach the heart.

Campbell's Pleasures of Hope is of the same school, in which a painful attention is paid to the expression in proportion as there is little to express, and the decomposition of prose is substituted for the composition of poetry. How much the sense and keeping in the ideas are sacrificed to a jingle of words and epigrammatic turn of expression, may be seen in such lines as the following:—one of the characters, an old invalid, wishes to end his days under

> 'Some hamlet shade, to yield his sickly form
> Health in the breeze, and shelter in the storm.'

Now the antithesis here totally fails: for it is the breeze, and not the tree, or as it is quaintly expressed, *hamlet shade*, that affords health, though it is the tree that affords shelter in or from the storm. Instances of the same sort of *curiosa infelicitas* are not rare in this author. His verses on the Battle of Hohenlinden have considerable spirit and animation. His Gertrude of Wyoming is his principal performance. It is a kind of historical paraphrase of Mr. Wordsworth's poem of Ruth. It shews little power, or power enervated by extreme fastidiousness. It is

> '——— Of outward show
> Elaborate; of inward less exact.'

There are painters who trust more to the setting of their pictures than to the truth of the likeness. Mr. Campbell always seems to me to be thinking how his poetry will look when it comes to be hot-pressed on superfine wove paper, to have a disproportionate eye to points and commas, and dread of errors of the press. He is so afraid of doing wrong, of making the smallest mistake, that he does little or nothing. Lest he should wander irretrievably from the right path, he stands still. He writes according to established etiquette. He offers the Muses no violence. If he lights upon a good thought, he immediately drops it for fear of spoiling a good thing. When he launches a sentiment that you think will float him triumphantly for once to the bottom of the stanza, he stops short at the end of the first or second line, and stands shivering on the brink of beauty, afraid to trust himself to the fathomless abyss. *Tutus nimium, timidusque procellarum.* His very circumspection betrays him. The poet, as well as the woman, that deliberates, is undone. He is much like a man whose heart fails him just as he is going up in a balloon, and who breaks his neck by flinging himself out of it

when it is too late. Mr. Campbell too often maims and mangles his ideas before they are full formed, to fit them to the Procustes' bed of criticism; or strangles his intellectual offspring in the birth, lest they should come to an untimely end in the Edinburgh Review. He plays the hypercritic on himself, and starves his genius to death from a needless apprehension of a plethora. No writer who thinks habitually of the critics, either to tremble at their censures or set them at defiance, can write well. It is the business of reviewers to watch poets, not of poets to watch reviewers.—There is one admirable simile in this poem, of the European child brought by the sooty Indian in his hand, 'like morning brought by night.' The love-scenes in Gertrude of Wyoming breathe a balmy voluptuousness of sentiment; but they are generally broken off in the middle; they are like the scent of a bank of violets, faint and rich, which the gale suddenly conveys in a different direction. Mr. Campbell is careful of his own reputation, and economical of the pleasures of his readers. He treats them as the fox in the fable treated his guest the stork; or, to use his own expression, his fine things are

'Like angels' visits, few, and far between.'[1]

There is another fault in this poem, which is the mechanical structure of the fable. The most striking events occur in the shape of antitheses. The story is cut into the form of a parallelogram. There is the same systematic alternation of good and evil, of violence and repose, that there is of light and shade in a picture. The Indian, who is the chief agent in the interest of the poem, vanishes and returns after long intervals, like the periodical revolutions of the planets. He unexpectedly appears just in the nick of time, after years of absence, and without any known reason but the convenience of the author and the astonishment of the reader; as if nature were a machine constructed on a principle of complete contrast, to produce a theatrical effect. *Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus.* Mr. Campbell's savage never appears but upon great occasions, and then his punctuality is preternatural and alarming. He is the most wonderful instance on record of poetical *reliability*. The most dreadful mischiefs happen at the most mortifying moments; and when your expectations are wound up to the highest pitch, you are sure to have them knocked on the head by a premeditated and

[1] There is the same idea in Blair's Grave.

'——— Its visits,
Like those of angels, short, and far between.

Mr. Campbell in altering the expression has spoiled it. 'Few,' and 'far between,' are the same thing.

remorseless stroke of the poet's pen. This is done so often for the convenience of the author, that in the end it ceases to be for the satisfaction of the reader.

Tom Moore is a poet of a quite different stamp. He is as heedless, gay, and prodigal of his poetical wealth, as the other is careful, reserved, and parsimonious. The genius of both is national. Mr. Moore's Muse is another Ariel, as light, as tricksy, as indefatigable, and as humane a spirit. His fancy is for ever on the wing, flutters in the gale, glitters in the sun. Every thing lives, moves, and sparkles in his poetry, while over all love waves his purple light. His thoughts are as restless, as many, and as bright as the insects that people the sun's beam. 'So work the honey-bees,' extracting liquid sweets from opening buds; so the butterfly expands its wings to the idle air; so the thistle's silver down is wafted over summer seas. An airy voyager on life's stream, his mind inhales the fragrance of a thousand shores, and drinks of endless pleasures under halcyon skies. Wherever his footsteps tend over the enamelled ground of fairy fiction—

> 'Around him the bees in play flutter and cluster,
> And gaudy butterflies frolic around.'

The fault of Mr. Moore is an exuberance of involuntary power. His facility of production lessens the effect of, and hangs as a dead weight upon, what he produces. His levity at last oppresses. The infinite delight he takes in such an infinite number of things, creates indifference in minds less susceptible of pleasure than his own. He exhausts attention by being inexhaustible. His variety cloys; his rapidity dazzles and distracts the sight. The graceful ease with which he lends himself to every subject, the genial spirit with which he indulges in every sentiment, prevents him from giving their full force to the masses of things, from connecting them into a whole. He wants intensity, strength, and grandeur. His mind does not brood over the great and permanent; it glances over the surfaces, the first impressions of things, instead of grappling with the deep-rooted prejudices of the mind, its inveterate habits, and that 'perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart.' His pen, as it is rapid and fanciful, wants momentum and passion. It requires the same principle to make us thoroughly like poetry, that makes us like ourselves so well, the feeling of continued identity. The impressions of Mr. Moore's poetry are detached, desultory, and physical. Its gorgeous colours brighten and fade like the rainbow's. Its sweetness evaporates like the effluvia exhaled from beds of flowers! His gay laughing style, which relates to the immediate pleasures of love or wine, is better

than his sentimental and romantic vein. His Irish melodies are not free from affectation and a certain sickliness of pretension. His serious descriptions are apt to run into flowery tenderness. His pathos sometimes melts into a mawkish sensibility, or crystallizes into all the prettinesses of allegorical language, and glittering hardness of external imagery. But he has wit at will, and of the first quality. His satirical and burlesque poetry is his best: it is first-rate. His Twopenny Post-Bag is a perfect 'nest of spicery'; where the Cayenne is not spared. The politician there sharpens the poet's pen. In this too, our bard resembles the bee—he has its honey and its sting.

Mr. Moore ought not to have written Lalla Rookh, even for three thousand guineas. His fame is worth more than that. He should have minded the advice of Fadladeen. It is not, however, a failure, so much as an evasion and a consequent disappointment of public expectation. He should have left it to others to break conventions with nations, and faith with the world. He should, at any rate, have kept his with the public. Lalla Rookh is not what people wanted to see whether Mr. Moore could do; namely, whether he could write a long epic poem. It is four short tales. The interest, however, is often high-wrought and tragic, but the execution still turns to the effeminate and voluptuous side. Fortitude of mind is the first requisite of a tragic or epic writer. Happiness of nature and felicity of genius are the pre-eminent characteristics of the bard of Erin. If he is not perfectly contented with what he is, all the world beside is. He had no temptation to risk any thing in adding to the love and admiration of his age, and more than one country.

> 'Therefore to be possessed with double pomp,
> To guard a title that was rich before,
> To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet,
> To smooth the ice, or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
> To seek the beauteous eye of heav'n to garnish,
> Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.'

The same might be said of Mr. Moore's seeking to bind an epic crown, or the shadow of one, round his other laurels.

If Mr. Moore has not suffered enough personally, Lord Byron (judging from the tone of his writings) might be thought to have suffered too much to be a truly great poet. If Mr. Moore lays himself too open to all the various impulses of things, the outward shews of earth and sky, to every breath that blows, to every stray sentiment that crosses his fancy; Lord Byron shuts himself up too

much in the impenetrable gloom of his own thoughts, and buries the natural light of things in 'nook monastic.' The Giaour, the Corsair, Childe Harold, are all the same person, and they are apparently all himself. The everlasting repetition of one subject, the same dark ground of fiction, with the darker colours of the poet's mind spread over it, the unceasing accumulation of horrors on horror's head, steels the mind against the sense of pain, as inevitably as the unwearied Siren sounds and luxurious monotony of Mr. Moore's poetry make it inaccessible to pleasure. Lord Byron's poetry is as morbid as Mr. Moore's is careless and dissipated. He has more depth of passion, more force and impetuosity, but the passion is always of the same unaccountable character, at once violent and sullen, fierce and gloomy. It is not the passion of a mind struggling with misfortune, or the hopelessness of its desires, but of a mind preying upon itself, and disgusted with, or indifferent to all other things. There is nothing less poetical than this sort of unaccommodating selfishness. There is nothing more repulsive than this sort of ideal absorption of all the interests of others, of the good and ills of life, in the ruling passion and moody abstraction of a single mind, as if it would make itself the centre of the universe, and there was nothing worth cherishing but its intellectual diseases. It is like a cancer, eating into the heart of poetry. But still there is power; and power rivets attention and forces admiration. 'He hath a demon:' and that is the next thing to being full of the God. His brow collects the scattered gloom: his eye flashes livid fire that withers and consumes. But still we watch the progress of the scathing bolt with interest, and mark the ruin it leaves behind with awe. Within the contracted range of his imagination, he has great unity and truth of keeping. He chooses elements and agents congenial to his mind, the dark and glittering ocean, the frail bark hurrying before the storm, pirates and men that 'house on the wild sea with wild usages.' He gives the tumultuous eagerness of action, and the fixed despair of thought. In vigour of style and force of conception, he in one sense surpasses every writer of the present day. His indignant apothegms are like oracles of misanthropy. He who wishes for 'a curse to kill with,' may find it in Lord Byron's writings. Yet he has beauty lurking underneath his strength, tenderness sometimes joined with the phrenzy of despair. A flash of golden light sometimes follows from a stroke of his pencil, like a falling meteor. The flowers that adorn his poetry bloom over charnel-houses and the grave!

There is one subject on which Lord Byron is fond of writing, on which I wish he would not write—Buonaparte. Not that I quarrel with his writing for him, or against him, but with his writing both

for him and against him. What right has he to do this? Buonaparte's character, be it what else it may, does not change every hour according to his Lordship's varying humour. He is not a pipe for Fortune's finger, or for his Lordship's Muse, to play what stop she pleases on. Why should Lord Byron now laud him to the skies in the hour of his success, and then peevishly wreak his disappointment on the God of his idolatry? The man he writes of does not rise or fall with circumstances: but 'looks on tempests and is never shaken.' Besides, he is a subject for history, and not for poetry.

'Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread,
But as the marigold at the sun's eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried;
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior, famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil'd,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd.'

If Lord Byron will write any thing more on this hazardous theme, let him take these lines of Shakspeare for his guide, and finish them in the spirit of the original—they will then be worthy of the subject.

Walter Scott is the most popular of all the poets of the present day, and deservedly so. He describes that which is most easily and generally understood with more vivacity and effect than any body else. He has no excellences, either of a lofty or recondite kind, which lie beyond the reach of the most ordinary capacity to find out; but he has all the good qualities which all the world agree to understand. His style is clear, flowing, and transparent: his sentiments, of which his style is an easy and natural medium, are common to him with his readers. He has none of Mr. Wordsworth's *idiosyncracy*. He differs from his readers only in a greater range of knowledge and facility of expression. His poetry belongs to the class of *improvisatori* poetry. It has neither depth, height, nor breadth in it; neither uncommon strength, nor uncommon refinement of thought, sentiment, or language. It has no originality. But if this author has no research, no moving power in his own breast, he relies with the greater safety and success on the force of his subject. He selects a story such as is sure to please, full of incidents, characters, peculiar manners, costume, and scenery; and he tells it in a way that can offend no one. He never wearies or disappoints you. He is communicative and garrulous; but he is not his own hero. He never obtrudes himself on your notice to prevent your seeing the subject. What passes in the poem, passes much as it would have done in reality. The author has little or nothing to do with it. Mr. Scott has great

intuitive power of fancy, great vividness of pencil in placing external objects and events before the eye. The force of his mind is picturesque, rather than *moral*. He gives more of the features of nature than the soul of passion. He conveys the distinct outlines and visible changes in outward objects, rather than 'their mortal consequences.' He is very inferior to Lord Byron in intense passion, to Moore in delightful fancy, to Mr. Wordsworth in profound sentiment: but he has more picturesque power than any of them; that is, he places the objects themselves, about which *they* might feel and think, in a much more striking point of view, with greater variety of dress and attitude, and with more local truth of colouring. His imagery is Gothic and grotesque. The manners and actions have the interest and curiosity belonging to a wild country and a distant period of time. Few descriptions have a more complete reality, a more striking appearance of life and motion, than that of the warriors in the Lady of the Lake, who start up at the command of Rhoderic Dhu, from their concealment under the fern, and disappear again in an instant. The Lay of the Last Minstrel and Marmion are the first, and perhaps the best of his works. The Goblin Page, in the first of these, is a very interesting and inscrutable little personage. In reading these poems, I confess I am a little disconcerted, in turning over the page, to find Mr. Westall's pictures, which always seem *fac-similes* of the persons represented, with ancient costume and a theatrical air. This may be a compliment to Mr. Westall, but it is not one to Walter Scott. The truth is, there is a modern air in the midst of the antiquarian research of Mr. Scott's poetry. It is history or tradition in masquerade. Not only the crust of old words and images is worn off with time,—the substance is grown comparatively light and worthless. The forms are old and uncouth; but the spirit is effeminate and frivolous. This is a deduction from the praise I have given to his pencil for extreme fidelity, though it has been no obstacle to its drawing-room success. He has just hit the town between the romantic and the fashionable; and between the two, secured all classes of readers on his side. In a word, I conceive that he is to the great poet, what an excellent mimic is to a great actor. There is no determinate impression left on the mind by reading his poetry. It has no results. The reader rises up from the perusal with new images and associations, but he remains the same man that he was before. A great mind is one that moulds the minds of others. Mr. Scott has put the Border Minstrelsy and scattered traditions of the country into easy, animated verse. But the Notes to his poems are just as entertaining as the poems themselves, and his poems are only entertaining.

Mr. Wordsworth is the most original poet now living. He is the reverse of Walter Scott in his defects and excellences. He has nearly all that the other wants, and wants all that the other possesses. His poetry is not external, but internal; it does not depend upon tradition, or story, or old song; he furnishes it from his own mind, and is his own subject. He is the poet of mere sentiment. Of many of the Lyrical Ballads, it is not possible to speak in terms of too high praise, such as Hart-leap Well, the Banks of the Wye, Poor Susan, parts of the Leech-gatherer, the lines to a Cuckoo, to a Daisy, the Complaint, several of the Sonnets, and a hundred others of inconceivable beauty, of perfect originality and pathos. They open a finer and deeper vein of thought and feeling than any poet in modern times has done, or attempted. He has produced a deeper impression, and on a smaller circle, than any other of his contemporaries. His powers have been mistaken by the age, nor does he exactly understand them himself. He cannot form a whole. He has not the constructive faculty. He can give only the fine tones of thought, drawn from his mind by accident or nature, like the sounds drawn from the Æolian harp by the wandering gale.—He is totally deficient in all the machinery of poetry. His *Excursion*, taken as a whole, notwithstanding the noble materials thrown away in it, is a proof of this. The line labours, the sentiment moves slow, but the poem stands stock-still. The reader makes no way from the first line to the last. It is more than any thing in the world like Robinson Crusoe's boat, which would have been an excellent good boat, and would have carried him to the other side of the globe, but that he could not get it out of the sand where it stuck fast. I did what little I could to help to launch it at the time, but it would not do. I am not, however, one of those who laugh at the attempts or failures of men of genius. It is not my way to cry 'Long life to the conqueror.' Success and desert are not with me synonymous terms; and the less Mr. Wordsworth's general merits have been understood, the more necessary is it to insist upon them. This is not the place to repeat what I have already said on the subject. The reader may turn to it in the Round Table. I do not think, however, there is any thing in the larger poem equal to many of the detached pieces in the Lyrical Ballads. As Mr. Wordsworth's poems have been little known to the public, or chiefly through garbled extracts from them, I will here give an entire poem (one that has always been a favourite with me), that the reader may know what it is that the admirers of this author find to be delighted with in his poetry. Those who do not feel the beauty and the force of it, may save themselves the trouble of inquiring farther.

ON THE LIVING POETS

HART-LEAP WELL

'The knight had ridden down from Wensley moor
With the slow motion of a summer's cloud;
He turned aside towards a vassal's door,
And, "Bring another horse!" he cried aloud.

"Another horse!"—That shout the vassal heard,
And saddled his best steed, a comely gray;
Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third
Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing courser's eyes:
The horse and horseman are a happy pair;
But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,
There is a doleful silence in the air.

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's hall,
That as they galloped made the echoes roar;
But horse and man are vanished, one and all;
Such race, I think, was never seen before.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain:
Brach, Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain.

The knight hallooed, he chid and cheered them on
With suppliant gestures and upbraidings stern;
But breath and eye-sight fail; and, one by one,
The dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the race?
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?
—This chase it looks not like an earthly chase;
Sir Walter and the hart are left alone.

The poor hart toils along the mountain side;
I will not stop to tell how far he fled,
Nor will I mention by what death he died;
But now the knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting then, he leaned against a thorn;
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy:
He neither smacked his whip, nor blew his horn,
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter leaned,
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious act;
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is yeaned;
And foaming like a mountain cataract.

Upon his side the hart was lying stretched:
His nose half-touched a spring beneath a hill,
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetched
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest,
(Was never man in such a joyful case!)
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,
And gazed, and gazed upon that darling place.

And climbing up the hill—(it was at least
Nine roods of sheer ascent) Sir Walter found,
Three several hoof-marks which the hunted beast
Had left imprinted on the verdant ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face and cried, "Till now
Such sight was never seen by living eyes:
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow,
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

I 'll build a pleasure-house upon this spot,
And a small arbour, made for rural joy;
'Twill be the traveller's shed, the pilgrim's cot,
A place of love for damsels that are coy.

A cunning artist will I have to frame
A bason for that fountain in the dell;
And they, who do make mention of the same
From this day forth, shall call it HART-LEAP WELL.

And, gallant brute! to make thy praises known,
Another monument shall here be raised;
Three several pillars, each a rough-hewn stone,
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have grazed.

And, in the summer-time when days are long,
I will come hither with my paramour;
And with the dancers, and the minstrel's song,
We will make merry in that pleasant bower.

Till the foundations of the mountains fail,
My mansion with its arbour shall endure;—
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure!"

Then home he went, and left the hart, stone-dead,
With breathless nostrils stretched above the spring.
—Soon did the knight perform what he had said,
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring.

Ere thrice the moon into her port had steered,
A cup of stone received the living well;
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

And near the fountain, flowers of stature tall
With trailing plants and trees were intertwined,—
Which soon composed a little sylvan hall,
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer-days were long,
Sir Walter journeyed with his paramour;
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song
Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

The knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.—
But there is matter for a second rhyme,
And I to this would add another tale.'

PART SECOND

'The moving accident is not my trade:
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,
It chanced that I saw standing in a dell
Three aspens at three corners of a square,
And one, not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine:
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,
I saw three pillars standing in a line,
The last stone pillar on a dark hill-top.

The trees were gray, with neither arms nor head;
Half-wasted the square mound of tawny green;
So that you just might say, as then I said,
"Here in old time the hand of man hath been."

I looked upon the hill both far and near,
More doleful place did never eye survey;
It seemed as if the spring-time came not here,
And Nature here were willing to decay.

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost,
When one, who was in shepherd's garb attired,
Came up the hollow:—Him did I accost,
And what this place might be I then inquired.

The shepherd stopped, and that same story told
Which in my former rhyme I have rehearsed.
"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!
But something ails it now; the spot is curst.

You see these lifeless stumps of aspen wood—
Some say that they are beeches, others elms—
These were the bower; and here a mansion stood,
The finest palace of a hundred realms!

The arbour does its own condition tell;
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream;
But as to the great lodge! you might as well
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.

There 's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone;
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

Some say that here a murder has been done,
And blood cries out for blood: but, for my part,
I 've guessed, when I 've been sitting in the sun,
That it was all for that unhappy hart.

What thoughts must through the creature's brain have passed!
Even from the top-most stone, upon the steep,
Are but three bounds—and look, Sir, at this last—
—O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race;
And in my simple mind we cannot tell
What cause the hart might have to love this place,
And come and make his death-bed near the well.

Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,
Lulled by this fountain in the summer-tide;
This water was perhaps the first he drank
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

In April here beneath the scented thorn
He heard the birds their morning carols sing;
And he, perhaps, for aught we know, was born
Not half a furlong from that self-same spring.

But now here 's neither grass nor pleasant shade;
The sun on drearier hollow never shone;
So will it be, as I have often said,
Till trees, and stones, and fountain all are gone.'

'Gray-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
This beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep, and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

The pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,
This is no common waste, no common gloom;
But Nature, in due course of time, once more
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
That what we are, and have been, may be known;
But at the coming of the milder day,
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shews, and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.'

Mr. Wordsworth is at the head of that which has been denominated the Lake school of poetry; a school which, with all my respect for it, I do not think sacred from criticism or exempt from faults, of some of which faults I shall speak with becoming frankness; for I do not see that the liberty of the press ought to be shackled, or freedom of speech curtailed, to screen either its revolutionary or renegado extravagances. This school of poetry had its origin in the French revolution, or rather in those sentiments and opinions which produced that revolution; and which sentiments and opinions were indirectly imported into this country in translations from the German about that period. Our poetical literature had, towards the close of the last century, degenerated into the most trite, insipid, and mechanical of all things, in the hands of the followers of Pope and the old French school of poetry. It wanted something to stir it up, and it found that something in the principles and events of the French revolution. From the impulse it thus received, it rose at once from the most servile imitation and tamest common-place, to the utmost pitch of singularity and paradox. The change in the belles-lettres was as complete, and to many persons as startling, as the change in politics, with which it went hand in hand. There was a mighty ferment in the heads of statesmen and poets, kings and people. According to the prevailing notions, all was to be natural and new. Nothing that was established

was to be tolerated. All the common-place figures of poetry, tropes, allegories, personifications, with the whole heathen mythology, were instantly discarded; a classical allusion was considered as a piece of antiquated foppery; capital letters were no more allowed in print, than letters-patent of nobility were permitted in real life; kings and queens were dethroned from their rank and station in legitimate tragedy or epic poetry, as they were decapitated elsewhere; rhyme was looked upon as a relic of the feudal system, and regular metre was abolished along with regular government. Authority and fashion, elegance or arrangement, were hooted out of countenance, as pedantry and prejudice. Every one did that which was good in his own eyes. The object was to reduce all things to an absolute level; and a singularly affected and outrageous simplicity prevailed in dress and manners, in style and sentiment. A striking effect produced where it was least expected, something new and original, no matter whether good, bad, or indifferent, whether mean or lofty, extravagant or childish, was all that was aimed at, or considered as compatible with sound philosophy and an age of reason. The licentiousness grew extreme: Coryate's Crudities were nothing to it. The world was to be turned topsy-turvy; and poetry, by the good will of our Adam-wits, was to share its fate and begin *de novo*. It was a time of promise, a renewal of the world and of letters; and the Deucalions, who were to perform this feat of regeneration, were the present poet-laureat and the two authors of the Lyrical Ballads. The Germans, who made heroes of robbers, and honest women of cast-off mistresses, had already exhausted the extravagant and marvellous in sentiment and situation: our native writers adopted a wonderful simplicity of style and matter. The paradox they set out with was, that all things are by nature equally fit subjects for poetry; or that if there is any preference to be given, those that are the meanest and most unpromising are the best, as they leave the greatest scope for the unbounded stores of thought and fancy in the writer's own mind. Poetry had with them 'neither buttress nor coigne of vantage to make its pendant bed and procreant cradle.' It was not 'born so high: its aiery buildeth in the cedar's top, and dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun.' It grew like a mushroom out of the ground; or was hidden in it like a truffle, which it required a particular sagacity and industry to find out and dig up. They founded the new school on a principle of sheer humanity, on pure nature void of art. It could not be said of these sweeping reformers and dictators in the republic of letters, that 'in their train walked crowns and crownets; that realms and islands, like plates, dropt from their pockets': but they were surrounded, in company with the Muses, by a mixed rabble of idle

apprentices and Botany Bay convicts, female vagrants, gipsies, meek daughters in the family of Christ, of ideot boys and mad mothers, and after them 'owls and night-ravens flew.' They scorned 'degrees, priority, and place, insisture, course, proportion, season, form, office, and custom in all line of order':—the distinctions of birth, the vicissitudes of fortune, did not enter into their abstracted, lofty, and levelling calculation of human nature. He who was more than man, with them was none. They claimed kindred only with the commonest of the people: peasants, pedlars, and village-barbers were their oracles and bosom friends. Their poetry, in the extreme to which it professedly tended, and was in effect carried, levels all distinctions of nature and society; has 'no figures nor no fantasies,' which the prejudices of superstition or the customs of the world draw in the brains of men; 'no trivial fond records' of all that has existed in the history of past ages; it has no adventitious pride, pomp, or circumstance, to set it off; 'the marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe'; neither tradition, reverence, nor ceremony, 'that to great ones 'longs': it breaks in pieces the golden images of poetry, and defaces its armorial bearings, to melt them down in the mould of common humanity or of its own upstart self-sufficiency. They took the same method in their new-fangled 'metre ballad-mongering' scheme, which Rousseau did in his prose paradoxes—of exciting attention by reversing the established standards of opinion and estimation in the world. They were for bringing poetry back to its primitive simplicity and state of nature, as he was for bringing society back to the savage state: so that the only thing remarkable left in the world by this change, would be the persons who had produced it. A thorough adept in this school of poetry and philanthropy is jealous of all excellence but his own. He does not even like to share his reputation with his subject; for he would have it all proceed from his own power and originality of mind. Such a one is slow to admire any thing that is admirable; feels no interest in what is most interesting to others, no grandeur in any thing grand, no beauty in anything beautiful. He tolerates only what he himself creates; he sympathizes only with what can enter into no competition with him, with 'the bare trees and mountains bare, and grass in the green field.' He sees nothing but himself and the universe. He hates all greatness and all pretensions to it, whether well or ill-founded. His egotism is in some respects a madness; for he scorns even the admiration of himself, thinking it a presumption in any one to suppose that he has taste or sense enough to understand him. He hates all science and all art; he hates chemistry, he hates conchology; he hates Voltaire; he hates Sir Isaac Newton; he

hates wisdom; he hates wit; he hates metaphysics, which he says are unintelligible, and yet he would be thought to understand them; he hates prose; he hates all poetry but his own; he hates the dialogues in Shakespeare; he hates music, dancing, and painting; he hates Rubens, he hates Rembrandt; he hates Raphael, he hates Titian; he hates Vandyke; he hates the antique; he hates the Apollo Belvidere; he hates the Venus of Medicis. This is the reason that so few people take an interest in his writings, because he takes an interest in nothing that others do!—The effect has been perceived as something odd; but the cause or principle has never been distinctly traced to its source before, as far as I know. The proofs are to be found every where—in Mr. Southey's Botany Bay Eclogues, in his book of Songs and Sonnets, his Odes and Inscriptions, so well parodied in the Anti-Jacobin Review, in his Joan of Arc, and last, though not least, in his Wat Tyler:

'When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?'

(—or the poet laureat either, we may ask?)—In Mr. Coleridge's Ode to an Ass's Foal, in his Lines to Sarah, his Religious Musings; and in his and Mr. Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, *passim*.

Of Mr. Southey's larger epics, I have but a faint recollection at this distance of time, but all that I remember of them is mechanical and extravagant, heavy and superficial. His affected, disjointed style is well imitated in the Rejected Addresses. The difference between him and Sir Richard Blackmore seems to be, that the one is heavy and the other light, the one solemn and the other pragmatical, the one phlegmatic and the other flippant; and that there is no Gay in the present time to give a Catalogue Raisonné of the performances of the living undertaker of epics. Kehama is a loose sprawling figure, such as we see cut out of wood or paper, and pulled or jerked with wire or thread, to make sudden and surprising motions, without meaning, grace, or nature in them. By far the best of his works are some of his shorter personal compositions, in which there is an ironical mixture of the quaint and serious, such as his lines on a picture of Gaspar Poussin, the fine tale of Gualberto, his Description of a Pig, and the Holly-tree, which is an affecting, beautiful, and modest retrospect on his own character. May the aspiration with which it concludes be fulfilled![1]—But the little he has done of true

[1] 'O reader! hast thou ever stood to see
The Holly Tree?
The eye that contemplates it well perceives
Its glossy leaves,

and sterling excellence, is overloaded by the quantity of indifferent matter which he turns out every year, 'prosing or versing,' with equally mechanical and irresistible facility. His Essays, or political and moral disquisitions, are not so full of original matter as Montaigne's. They are second or third rate compositions in that class.

It remains that I should say a few words of Mr. Coleridge; and there is no one who has a better right to say what he thinks of him

Ordered by an intelligence so wise
As might confound the Atheist's sophistries.

Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarm'd the pointless leaves appear.

I love to view these things with curious eyes,
And moralize;
And in the wisdom of the Holly Tree
Can emblems see
Wherewith perchance to make a pleasant rhyme,
Such as may profit in the after time.

So, though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere,
To those who on my leisure would intrude
Reserved and rude,
Gentle at home amid my friends I 'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

And should my youth, as youth is apt I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The Holly leaves their fadeless hues display
Less bright than they,
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the Holly Tree?

So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng,
So would I seem amid the young and gay
More grave than they,
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the Holly Tree.'—

than I have. 'Is there here any dear friend of Cæsar? To him I say, that Brutus's love to Cæsar was no less than his.' But no matter.—His Ancient Mariner is his most remarkable performance, and the only one that I could point out to any one as giving an adequate idea of his great natural powers. It is high German, however, and in it he seems to 'conceive of poetry but as a drunken dream, reckless, careless, and heedless, of past, present, and to come.' His tragedies (for he has written two) are not answerable to it; they are, except a few poetical passages, drawling sentiment and metaphysical jargon. He has no genuine dramatic talent. There is one fine passage in his Christabel, that which contains the description of the quarrel between Sir Leoline and Sir Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine, who had been friends in youth.

'Alas! they had been friends in youth,
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain:
And thus it chanc'd as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother,
And parted ne'er to meet again!
But neither ever found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—

They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder:
A dreary sea now flows between,
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away I ween
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline a moment's space
Stood gazing on the damsel's face;
And the youthful lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.'

It might seem insidious if I were to praise his ode entitled Fire, Famine, and Slaughter, as an effusion of high poetical enthusiasm, and strong political feeling. His Sonnet to Schiller conveys a fine compliment to the author of the Robbers, and an equally fine idea of the state of youthful enthusiasm in which he composed it.

'Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,
If through the shudd'ring midnight I had sent
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent,
That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry—

That in no after moment aught less vast
Might stamp me mortal! A triumphant shout
Black Horror scream'd, and all her goblin rout
From the more with'ring scene diminish'd pass'd.

Ah! Bard tremendous in sublimity!
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wand'ring at eve, with finely frenzied eye,
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood!
Awhile, with mute awe gazing, I would brood,
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstacy!'—

His *Conciones ad Populum*, Watchman, &c. are dreary trash. Of his Friend, I have spoken the truth elsewhere. But I may say of him here, that he is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius. He is the only person from whom I ever learnt any thing. There is only one thing he could learn from me in return, but *that* he has not. He was the first poet I ever knew. His genius at that time had angelic wings, and fed on manna. He talked on for ever; and you wished him to talk on for ever. His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort; but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of his imagination lifted him from off his feet. His voice rolled on the ear like the pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought. His mind was clothed with wings; and raised on them, he lifted philosophy to heaven. In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I! . . . . That spell is broke; that time is gone for ever; that voice is heard no more: but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound.

'What though the radiance which was once so bright,
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flow'r;
I do not grieve, but rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy,

Which having been, must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In years that bring the philosophic mind!'—

I have thus gone through the task I intended, and have come at last to the level ground. I have felt my subject gradually sinking from under me as I advanced, and have been afraid of ending in nothing. The interest has unavoidably decreased at almost every successive step of the progress, like a play that has its catastrophe in the first or second act. This, however, I could not help. I have done as well as I could.

End of LECTURES ON
THE ENGLISH POETS

LECTURES ON THE DRAMATIC LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

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ADVERTISEMENT

By the Age of Elizabeth (as it relates to the History of our Literature) I would be understood to mean the time from the Reformation, to the end of Charles I. including the Writers of a certain School or style of Poetry or Prose, who flourished together or immediately succeeded one another within this period. I have, in the following pages, said little of two of the greatest Writers of that Age, Shakespear and Spenser, because I had treated of them separately in former Publications.

LECTURES ON

THE AGE OF ELIZABETH, &c.

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT

The age of Elizabeth was distinguished, beyond, perhaps, any other in our history, by a number of great men, famous in different ways, and whose names have come down to us with unblemished honours; statesmen, warriors, divines, scholars, poets, and philosophers, Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Hooker, and higher and more sounding still, and still more frequent in our mouths, Shakespear, Spenser, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, men whom fame has eternised in her long and lasting scroll, and who, by their words and acts, were benefactors of their country, and ornaments of human nature. Their attainments of different kinds bore the same general stamp, and it was sterling: what they did, had the mark of their age and country upon it. Perhaps the genius of Great Britain (if I may so speak without offence or flattery), never shone out fuller or brighter, or looked more like itself, than at this period. Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil from which they grew: they were not French, they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel, and but little art; they were not the spoiled children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace, and heartfelt unobtrusive delicacy. They were not at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was great in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement, they did not forget that they were men: with all their endeavours after excellence, they did not lay aside the strong original bent and character of their minds.

What they performed was chiefly nature's handy-work; and time has claimed it for his own.—To these, however, might be added others not less learned, nor with a scarce less happy vein, but less fortunate in the event, who, though as renowned in their day, have sunk into 'mere oblivion,' and of whom the only record (but that the noblest) is to be found in their works. Their works and their names, 'poor, poor dumb names,' are all that remains of such men as Webster, Deckar, Marston, Marlow, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley! 'How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails them not:' though they were the friends and fellow-labourers of Shakespear, sharing his fame and fortunes with him, the rivals of Jonson, and the masters of Beaumont and Fletcher's well-sung woes! They went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights; or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away every thing in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gew-gaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II. and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true Fame! How long, before it will be completed?

If I can do any thing to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity, and to do them right, without prejudice to well-deserved reputation, I shall have succeeded in what I chiefly propose. I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling, or restore the pointing, as if the genius of poetry lay hid in errors of the press, but leaving these weightier matters of criticism to those who are more able and willing to bear the burden, try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, 'draw the curtain of Time, and shew the picture of Genius,' restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds!

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final accomplishment to the present, or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us, as labouring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements which we have made, as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves 'of poring pedantry'; and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilization upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternized, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends

by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement (as near as can be) of the nineteenth, or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect and that of the world, like 'the sacred influence of light' glimmering on the confines of Chaos and old night; new manners rise, and all the cumbrous 'pomp of elder days' vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that every thing beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error; and all, before the present enlightened period, but a dull and useless blank in the great map of time. We are so dazzled with the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our own vanity and shortsightedness. The modern sciolist *stultifies* all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began to think then for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew any thing till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love! Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children, are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine, that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding; 'nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive,' in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts,

or as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A falser inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity. 'Think,' says Shakespear, the prompter of good and true feelings, 'there 's livers out of Britain.' So there have been thinkers, and great and sound ones, before our time. They had the same capacities that we have, sometimes greater motives for their exertion, and, for the most part, the same subject-matter to work upon. What we learn from nature, we may hope to do as well as they; what we learn from them, we may in general expect to do worse.—What is, I think, as likely as any thing to cure us of this overweening admiration of the present, and unmingled contempt for past times, is the looking at the finest old pictures; at Raphael's heads, at Titian's faces, at Claude's landscapes. We have there the evidence of the senses, without the alterations of opinion or disguise of language. We there see the blood circulate through the veins (long before it was known that it did so), the same red and white 'by nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on,' the same thoughts passing through the mind and seated on the lips, the same blue sky, and glittering sunny vales, 'where Pan, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, leads on the eternal spring.' And we begin to feel, that nature and the mind of man are not a thing of yesterday, as we had been led to suppose; and that 'there are more things between heaven and earth, than were ever dreamt of in our philosophy.'—Or grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high, on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and speculative inquiry, where by going often over the same general ground, certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject, truth has at last been hit upon, and long-established error exploded; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowledge, to a million of things beside, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find, by going to the fountain-head of thought and experience. We are quite wrong in supposing (as we are apt to do), that we can plead an exclusive title to wit and wisdom, to taste and genius, as the net produce and clear reversion of the age we live in, and that all we have to do to be great, is to despise those who have gone before us as nothing.

Or even if we admit a saving clause in this sweeping proscription, and do not make the rule absolute, the very nature of the exceptions shews the spirit in which they are made. We single out one or two

striking instances, say Shakespear or Lord Bacon, which we would fain treat as prodigies, and as a marked contrast to the rudeness and barbarism that surrounded them. These we delight to dwell upon and magnify; the praise and wonder we heap upon their shrines, are at the expence of the time in which they lived, and would leave it poor indeed. We make them out something more than human, 'matchless, divine, what we will,' so to make them no rule for their age, and no infringement of the abstract claim to superiority which we set up. Instead of letting them reflect any lustre, or add any credit to the period of history to which they rightfully belong, we only make use of their example to insult and degrade it still more beneath our own level.

It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old English literature; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition, than the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful; our love cold; our knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote; but we are shy of looking into their works. Though we seem disposed to think highly of them, and to give them every credit for a masculine and original vein of thought, as a matter of literary courtesy and enlargement of taste, we are afraid of coming to the proof, as too great a trial of our candour and patience. We regard the enthusiastic admiration of these obsolete authors, or a desire to make proselytes to a belief in their extraordinary merits, as an amiable weakness, a pleasing delusion; and prepare to listen to some favourite passage, that may be referred to in support of this singular taste, with an incredulous smile; and are in no small pain for the result of the hazardous experiment; feeling much the same awkward condescending disposition to patronise these first crude attempts at poetry and lispings of the Muse, as when a fond parent brings forward a bashful child to make a display of its wit or learning. We hope the best, put a good face on the matter, but are sadly afraid the thing cannot answer.—Dr. Johnson said of these writers generally, that 'they were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce, had they been much esteemed.' His decision is neither true history nor sound criticism. They were esteemed, and they deserved to be so.

One cause that might be pointed out here, as having contributed to the long-continued neglect of our earlier writers, lies in the very nature of our academic institutions, which unavoidably neutralizes a taste for the productions of native genius, estranges the mind from the history of our own literature, and makes it in each successive age like a book sealed. The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of

privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a University education, and leave little leisure for a competent acquaintance with, or due admiration of, a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form's sake, and to save the national character. Thus we keep a few of these always ready in capitals, and strike off the rest, to prevent the tendency to a superfluous population in the republic of letters; in other words, to prevent the writers from becoming more numerous than the readers. The ancients are become effete in this respect, they no longer increase and multiply; or if they have imitators among us, no one is expected to read, and still less to admire them. It is not possible that the learned professors and the reading public should clash in this way, or necessary for them to use any precautions against each other. But it is not the same with the living languages, where there is danger of being overwhelmed by the crowd of competitors; and pedantry has combined with ignorance to cancel their unsatisfied claims.

We affect to wonder at Shakespear, and one or two more of that period, as solitary instances upon record; whereas it is our own dearth of information that makes the waste; for there is no time more populous of intellect, or more prolific of intellectual wealth, than the one we are speaking of. Shakespear did not look upon himself in this light, as a sort of monster of poetical genius, or on his contemporaries as 'less than smallest dwarfs,' when he speaks with true, not false modesty, of himself and them, and of his wayward thoughts, 'desiring this man's art, and that man's scope.' We fancy that there were no such men, that could either add to or take any thing away from him, but such there were. He indeed overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the *tableland* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows, 'in shape and gesture proudly eminent'; but he was one of a race of giants, the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful, and beautiful of them; but it was a common and a noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with nature and the circumstances of the time, and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him; nor could he have been wrenched from his place in the edifice of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, 'that his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.' This cannot be said with any

propriety of Shakespear, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and 'drew after him a third part of the heavens.' If we allow, for argument's sake (or for truth's, which is better), that he was in himself equal to all his competitors put together; yet there was more dramatic excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their united strength, would hardly make one Shakespear, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one. With the exception of a single writer, Otway, and of a single play of his (Venice Preserved), there is nobody in tragedy and dramatic poetry (I do not here speak of comedy) to be compared to the great men of the age of Shakespear, and immediately after. They are a mighty phalanx of kindred spirits closing him round, moving in the same orbit, and impelled by the same causes in their whirling and eccentric career. They had the same faults and the same excellences; the same strength and depth and richness, the same truth of character, passion, imagination, thought and language, thrown, heaped, massed together without careful polishing or exact method, but poured out in unconcerned profusion from the lap of nature and genius in boundless and unrivalled magnificence. The sweetness of Deckar, the thought of Marston, the gravity of Chapman, the grace of Fletcher and his young-eyed wit, Jonson's learned sock, the flowing vein of Middleton, Heywood's ease, the pathos of Webster, and Marlow's deep designs, add a double lustre to the sweetness, thought, gravity, grace, wit, artless nature, copiousness, ease, pathos, and sublime conceptions of Shakespear's Muse. They are indeed the scale by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him: but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it.—For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned; and we may seek for the chief of them in religion, in politics, in the circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages placed within their reach.

I shall here attempt to give a general sketch of these causes, and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at the period of which I have to treat; independently of incidental and fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in determining the most important results.

The first cause I shall mention, as contributing to this general effect, was the Reformation, which had just then taken place. This

event gave a mighty impulse and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general; but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigotted faith and slavish obedience; and the roar and dashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watch-word; but England joined the shout, and echoed it back with her island voice, from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry, the genius of Great Britain rose, and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation: the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection. Liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy; their spirits stirring; their hearts full; and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death-blow which had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy, loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love-tokens of Popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great work. It threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers (such they were thought) to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burnt within them as they read. It gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment: it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive in the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We perceive in the history of this period a nervous masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character. But there is a gravity approaching to piety; a seriousness

of impression, a conscientious severity of argument, an habitual fervour and enthusiasm in their mode of handling almost every subject. The debates of the schoolmen were sharp and subtle enough; but they wanted interest and grandeur, and were besides confined to a few: they did not affect the general mass of the community. But the Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions 'to run and read,' with its wonderful table of contents from Genesis to the Revelations. Every village in England would present the scene so well described in Burns's Cotter's Saturday Night. I cannot think that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be thrown in all at once upon the mind of a people, and not make some impressions upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of rivetting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildernesses) equal to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachael and Laban, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel, an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel, need be made of no 'penetrable stuff.' There is something in the character of Christ too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before, nor since. This shone manifestly both in his words and actions. We see it in his washing the Disciples' feet the night before his death, that unspeakable instance of humility and love, above all art, all meanness, and all pride, and in the leave he took of them on that occasion, 'My peace I give unto you, that peace which the world cannot give, give I unto you'; and in his last commandment, that 'they should love one another.' Who can read the account of his behaviour on the cross,

when turning to his mother he said, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and to the Disciple John, 'Behold thy mother,' and 'from that hour that Disciple took her to his own home,' without having his heart smote within him! We see it in his treatment of the woman taken in adultery, and in his excuse for the woman who poured precious ointment on his garment as an offering of devotion and love, which is here all in all. His religion was the religion of the heart. We see it in his discourse with the Disciples as they walked together towards Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them; in his sermon from the Mount, in his parable of the good Samaritan, and in that of the Prodigal Son—in every act and word of his life, a grace, a mildness, a dignity and love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in this word, *charity*; it was the spring, the well-head from which every thought and feeling gushed into act; and it was this that breathed a mild glory from his face in that last agony upon the cross, 'when the meek Saviour bowed his head and died,' praying for his enemies. He was the first true teacher of morality; for he alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity. He redeemed man from the worship of that idol, self, and instructed him by precept and example to love his neighbour as himself, to forgive our enemies, to do good to those that curse us and despitefully use us. He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal or sinister views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. In answering the question, 'who is our neighbour?' as one who stands in need of our assistance, and whose wounds we can bind up, he has done more to humanize the thoughts and tame the unruly passions, than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind. The very idea of abstract benevolence, of the desire to do good because another wants our services, and of regarding the human race as one family, the offspring of one common parent, is hardly to be found in any other code or system. It was 'to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' The Greeks and Romans never thought of considering others, but as they were Greeks or Romans, as they were bound to them by certain positive ties, or, on the other hand, as separated from them by fiercer antipathies. Their virtues were the virtues of political machines, their vices were the vices of demons, ready to inflict or to endure pain with obdurate and remorseless inflexibility of purpose. But in the Christian religion, 'we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation, and the iron scales that fence and harden it, melt and drop off.' It becomes malleable, capable of pity, of forgiveness, of relaxing in its claims, and remitting its power. We strike it, and it does not hurt

us: it is not steel or marble, but flesh and blood, clay tempered with tears, and 'soft as sinews of the new-born babe.' The gospel was first preached to the poor, for it consulted their wants and interests, not its own pride and arrogance. It first promulgated the equality of mankind in the community of duties and benefits. It denounced the iniquities of the chief Priests and Pharisees, and declared itself at variance with principalities and powers, for it sympathizes not with the oppressor, but the oppressed. It first abolished slavery, for it did not consider the power of the will to inflict injury, as clothing it with a right to do so. Its law is good, not power. It at the same time tended to wean the mind from the grossness of sense, and a particle of its divine flame was lent to brighten and purify the lamp of love!

There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the divine mission of Christ, have taken an unaccountable prejudice to his doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of his character; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief) one of whom says of him, with a boldness equal to its piety:

> 'The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.'

This was old honest Deckar, and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius. Nor can I help thinking, that we may discern the traces of the influence exerted by religious faith in the spirit of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth, in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope, and the abyss of despair it lays open to us.[1]

The literature of this age then, I would say, was strongly influenced (among other causes), first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism.

The effects of the Reformation on politics and philosophy may be seen in the writings and history of the next and of the following ages. They are still at work, and will continue to be so. The effects on the poetry of the time were chiefly confined to the moulding of the character, and giving a powerful impulse to the intellect of the

[1] In some Roman Catholic countries, pictures in part supplied the place of the translation of the Bible: and this dumb art arose in the silence of the written oracles.

country. The immediate use or application that was made of religion to subjects of imagination and fiction was not (from an obvious ground of separation) so direct or frequent, as that which was made of the classical and romantic literature.

For much about the same time, the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic poetry of Spain and Italy, were eagerly explored by the curious, and thrown open in translations to the admiring gaze of the vulgar. This last circumstance could hardly have afforded so much advantage to the poets of that day, who were themselves, in fact, the translators, as it shews the general curiosity and increasing interest in such subjects, as a prevailing feature of the times. There were translations of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Ariosto by Harrington, of Homer and Hesiod by Chapman, and of Virgil long before, and Ovid soon after; there was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, of which Shakespear has made such admirable use in his Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar: and Ben Jonson's tragedies of Catiline and Sejanus may themselves be considered as almost literal translations into verse, of Tacitus, Sallust, and Cicero's Orations in his consulship. Boccacio, the divine Boccacio, Petrarch, Dante, the satirist Aretine, Machiavel, Castiglione, and others, were familiar to our writers, and they make occasional mention of some few French authors, as Ronsard and Du Bartas; for the French literature had not at this stage arrived at its Augustan period, and it was the imitation of their literature a century afterwards, when it had arrived at its greatest height (itself copied from the Greek and Latin), that enfeebled and impoverished our own. But of the time that we are considering, it might be said, without much extravagance, that every breath that blew, that every wave that rolled to our shores, brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was engrafted on the national genius. In fact, all the disposeable materials that had been accumulating for a long period of time, either in our own, or in foreign countries, were now brought together, and required nothing more than to be wrought up, polished, or arranged in striking forms, for ornament and use. To this every inducement prompted, the novelty of the acquisition of knowledge in many cases, the emulation of foreign wits, and of immortal works, the want and the expectation of such works among ourselves, the opportunity and encouragement afforded for their production by leisure and affluence; and, above all, the insatiable desire of the mind to beget its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight and admiration of the world and posterity, that excellence of which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of heaven, the benefit as common as the

air we breathe. The first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before: the contemplation of that, which is so created, is sufficient to satisfy the demands of taste; and it is the habitual study and imitation of the original models that takes away the power, and even wish to do the like. Taste limps after genius, and from copying the artificial models, we lose sight of the living principle of nature. It is the effort we make, and the impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that projects us forward; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and *virtù*.

What also gave an unusual *impetus* to the mind of man at this period, was the discovery of the New World, and the reading of voyages and travels. Green islands and golden sands seemed to arise, as by enchantment, out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity, or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairy land was realised in new and unknown worlds. 'Fortunate fields and groves and flowery vales, thrice happy isles,' were found floating 'like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,' beyond Atlantic seas, as dropt from the zenith. The people, the soil, the clime, everything gave unlimited scope to the curiosity of the traveller and reader. Other manners might be said to enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and new mines of wealth were tumbled at our feet. It is from a voyage to the Straits of Magellan that Shakespear has taken the hint of Prospero's Enchanted Island, and of the savage Caliban with his god Setebos.[1] Spenser seems to have had the same feeling in his mind in the production of his Faery Queen, and vindicates his poetic fiction on this very ground of analogy.

> 'Right well I wote, most mighty sovereign,
> That all this famous antique history
> Of some the abundance of an idle brain
> Will judged be, and painted forgery,
> Rather than matter of just memory:
> Since none that breatheth living air, doth know
> Where is that happy land of faery
> Which I so much do vaunt, but no where show,
> But vouch antiquities, which nobody can know.
>
> But let that man with better sense avise,
> That of the world least part to us is read:
> And daily how through hardy enterprize
> Many great regions are discovered,

[1] See a Voyage to the Straits of Magellan, 1594.

Which to late age were never mentioned.
Who ever heard of th' Indian Peru?
Or who in venturous vessel measured
The Amazons' huge river, now found true?
Or fruitfullest Virginia who did ever view?

Yet all these were when no man did them know,
Yet have from wisest ages hidden been:
And later times things more unknown shall show.
Why then should witless man so much misween
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?
What if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
What if in every other star unseen,
Of other worlds he happily should hear,
He wonder would much more; yet such to some appear.'

Fancy's air-drawn pictures after history's waking dream shewed like clouds over mountains; and from the romance of real life to the idlest fiction, the transition seemed easy.—Shakespear, as well as others of his time, availed himself of the old Chronicles, and of the traditions or fabulous inventions contained in them in such ample measure, and which had not yet been appropriated to the purposes of poetry or the drama. The stage was a new thing; and those who had to supply its demands laid their hands upon whatever came within their reach: they were not particular as to the means, so that they gained the end. Lear is founded upon an old ballad; Othello on an Italian novel; Hamlet on a Danish, and Macbeth on a Scotch tradition: one of which is to be found in Saxo-Grammaticus, and the last in Hollingshed. The Ghost-scenes and the Witches in each, are authenticated in the old Gothic history. There was also this connecting link between the poetry of this age and the supernatural traditions of a former one, that the belief in them was still extant, and in full force and visible operation among the vulgar (to say no more) in the time of our authors. The appalling and wild chimeras of superstition and ignorance, 'those bodiless creations that ecstacy is very cunning in,' were inwoven with existing manners and opinions, and all their effects on the passions of terror or pity might be gathered from common and actual observation—might be discerned in the workings of the face, the expressions of the tongue, the writhings of a troubled conscience. 'Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters.' Midnight and secret murders too, from the imperfect state of the police, were more common; and the ferocious and brutal manners that would stamp the brow of the hardened ruffian or hired assassin, more incorrigible and undisguised. The portraits of Tyrrel and Forrest were, no doubt, done from the

life. We find that the ravages of the plague, the destructive rage of fire, the poisoned chalice, lean famine, the serpent's mortal sting, and the fury of wild beasts, were the common topics of their poetry, as they were common occurrences in more remote periods of history. They were the strong ingredients thrown into the cauldron of tragedy, to make it 'thick and slab.' Man's life was (as it appears to me) more full of traps and pit-falls; of hair-breadth accidents by flood and field; more way-laid by sudden and startling evils; it trod on the brink of hope and fear; stumbled upon fate unawares; while the imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or 'snatched a wild and fearful joy' from its escape. The accidents of nature were less provided against; the excesses of the passions and of lawless power were less regulated, and produced more strange and desperate catastrophes. The tales of Boccacio are founded on the great pestilence of Florence, Fletcher the poet died of the plague, and Marlow was stabbed in a tavern quarrel. The strict authority of parents, the inequality of ranks, or the hereditary feuds between different families, made more unhappy loves or matches.

'The course of true love never did run even.'

Again, the heroic and martial spirit which breathes in our elder writers, was yet in considerable activity in the reign of Elizabeth. 'The age of chivalry was not then quite gone, nor the glory of Europe extinguished for ever.' Jousts and tournaments were still common with the nobility in England and in foreign countries: Sir Philip Sidney was particularly distinguished for his proficiency in these exercises (and indeed fell a martyr to his ambition as a soldier) —and the gentle Surrey was still more famous, on the same account, just before him. It is true, the general use of firearms gradually superseded the necessity of skill in the sword, or bravery in the person: and as a symptom of the rapid degeneracy in this respect, we find Sir John Suckling soon after boasting of himself as one—

'Who prized black eyes, and a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.'

It was comparatively an age of peace,

'Like strength reposing on his own right arm;'

but the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance, the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of the ardent and the young. They were borderers on the savage state, on the times of war and bigotry, though in the lap of arts, of luxury, and knowledge. They stood on the

shore and saw the billows rolling after the storm: 'they heard the tumult, and were still.' The manners and out-of-door amusements were more tinctured with a spirit of adventure and romance. The war with wild beasts, &c. was more strenuously kept up in country sports. I do not think we could get from sedentary poets, who had never mingled in the vicissitudes, the dangers, or excitements of the chase, such descriptions of hunting and other athletic games, as are to be found in Shakespear's Midsummer Night's Dream, or Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen.

With respect to the good cheer and hospitable living of those times, I cannot agree with an ingenious and agreeable writer of the present day, that it was general or frequent. The very stress laid upon certain holidays and festivals, shews that they did not keep up the same Saturnalian licence and open house all the year round. They reserved themselves for great occasions, and made the best amends they could, for a year of abstinence and toil by a week of merriment and convivial indulgence. Persons in middle life at this day, who can afford a good dinner every day, do not look forward to it as any particular subject of exultation: the poor peasant, who can only contrive to treat himself to a joint of meat on a Sunday, considers it as an event in the week. So, in the old Cambridge comedy of the Returne from Parnassus, we find this indignant description of the progress of luxury in those days, put into the mouth of one of the speakers.

> 'Why is 't not strange to see a ragged clerke,
> Some stammell weaver, or some butcher's sonne,
> That scrubb'd a late within a sleeveless gowne,
> When the commencement, like a morrice dance,
> Hath put a bell or two about his legges,
> Created him a sweet cleane gentleman:
> How then he 'gins to follow fashions.
> He whose thin sire dwelt in a smokye roofe,
> Must take tobacco, and must wear a locke.
> His thirsty dad drinkes in a wooden bowle,
> But his sweet self is served in silver plate.
> His hungry sire will scrape you twenty legges
> For one good Christmas meal on new year's day,
> But his mawe must be capon cramm'd each day.'
>
> *Act III. Scene* 2.

This does not look as if in those days 'it snowed of meat and drink' as a matter of course throughout the year!—The distinctions of dress, the badges of different professions, the very signs of the shops, which we have set aside for written inscriptions over the doors, were, as Mr. Lamb observes, a sort of visible language to the imagination, and hints for thought. Like the costume of different foreign

nations, they had an immediate striking and picturesque effect, giving scope to the fancy. The surface of society was embossed with hieroglyphics, and poetry existed 'in act and complement extern.' The poetry of former times might be directly taken from real life, as our poetry is taken from the poetry of former times. Finally, the face of nature, which was the same glorious object then that it is now, was open to them; and coming first, they gathered her fairest flowers to live for ever in their verse:—the movements of the human heart were not hid from them, for they had the same passions as we, only less disguised, and less subject to controul. Deckar has given an admirable description of a mad-house in one of his plays. But it might be perhaps objected, that it was only a literal account taken from Bedlam at that time: and it might be answered, that the old poets took the same method of describing the passions and fancies of men whom they met at large, which forms the point of communion between us: for the title of the old play, 'A Mad World, my Masters,' is hardly yet obsolete; and we are pretty much the same Bedlam still, perhaps a little better managed, like the real one, and with more care and humanity shewn to the patients!

Lastly, to conclude this account; what gave a unity and common direction to all these causes, was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength. We are a nation of islanders, and we cannot help it; nor mend ourselves if we would. We are something in ourselves, nothing when we try to ape others. Music and painting are not our *forte*: for what we have done in that way has been little, and that borrowed from others with great difficulty. But we may boast of our poets and philosophers. That 's something. We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to be wished we had in no instance departed from it. Our situation has given us a certain cast of thought and character; and our liberty has enabled us to make the most of it. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent. We are slow to think, and therefore impressions do not work upon us till they act in masses. We are not forward to express our feelings, and therefore they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence. Our language is, as it were, to begin anew, and we make use of the most singular and boldest combinations to explain ourselves. Our wit comes from us, 'like birdlime, brains and all.' We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are

solid and of nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits. We both under and over-do, but we keep an eye to the prominent features, the main chance. We are more for weight than show; care only about what interests ourselves, instead of trying to impose upon others by plausible appearances, and are obstinate and intractable in not conforming to common rules, by which many arrive at their ends with half the real waste of thought and trouble. We neglect all but the principal object, gather our force to make a great blow, bring it down, and relapse into sluggishness and indifference again. *Materiam superabat opus*, cannot be said of us. We may be accused of grossness, but not of flimsiness; of extravagance, but not of affectation; of want of art and refinement, but not of a want of truth and nature. Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed, or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others. Our understanding (such as it is, and must remain to be good for any thing) is not a thoroughfare for common places, smooth as the palm of one's hand, but full of knotty points and jutting excrescences, rough, uneven, overgrown with brambles; and I like this aspect of the mind (as some one said of the country), where nature keeps a good deal of the soil in her own hands. Perhaps the genius of our poetry has more of Pan than of Apollo; 'but Pan is a God, Apollo is no more!'

LECTURE II

ON THE DRAMATIC WRITERS CONTEMPORARY WITH SHAKESPEAR, LYLY, MARLOW, HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON, AND ROWLEY

The period of which I shall have to treat (from the Reformation to the middle of Charles I.) was prolific in dramatic excellence, even more than in any other. In approaching it, we seem to be approaching the RICH STRAND described in Spenser, where treasures of all kinds

lay scattered, or rather crowded together on the shore in inexhaustible but unregarded profusion, 'rich as the oozy bottom of the deep in sunken wrack and sumless treasuries.' We are confounded with the variety, and dazzled with the dusky splendour of names sacred in their obscurity, and works gorgeous in their decay, 'majestic, though in ruin,' like Guyon when he entered the Cave of Mammon, and was shewn the massy pillars and huge unwieldy fragments of gold, covered with dust and cobwebs, and 'shedding a faint shadow of uncertain light,

> 'Such as a lamp whose light doth fade away,
> Or as the moon clothed with cloudy night
> Doth shew to him that walks in fear and sad affright.'

The dramatic literature of this period only wants exploring, to fill the enquiring mind with wonder and delight, and to convince us that we have been wrong in lavishing all our praise on 'new-born gauds, though they are made and moulded of things past;' and in 'giving to dust, that is a little gilded, more laud than gilt o'er-dusted.' In short, the discovery of such an unsuspected and forgotten mine of wealth will be found amply to repay the labour of the search, and it will be hard, if in most cases curiosity does not end in admiration, and modesty teach us wisdom. A few of the most singular productions of these times remain unclaimed; of others the authors are uncertain; many of them are joint productions of different pens; but of the best the writers' names are in general known, and obviously stamped on the productions themselves. The names of Ben Jonson, for instance, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, are almost, though not quite, as familiar to us, as that of Shakespear; and their works still keep regular possession of the stage. Another set of writers included in the same general period (the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century), who are next, or equal, or sometimes superior to these in power, but whose names are now little known, and their writings nearly obsolete, are Lyly, Marlow, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and Rowley, Heywood, Webster, Deckar, and Ford. I shall devote the present and two following Lectures to the best account I can give of these, and shall begin with some of the least known.

The earliest tragedy of which I shall take notice (I believe the earliest that we have) is that of Ferrex and Porrex, or Gorboduc (as it has been generally called), the production of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards created Earl of Dorset, assisted by one Thomas Norton. This was first acted with applause before the Queen in 1561, the noble author being then quite a young man.

This tragedy being considered as the first in our language, is certainly a curiosity, and in other respects it is also remarkable; though, perhaps, enough has been said about it. As a work of genius, it may be set down as nothing, for it contains hardly a memorable line or passage; as a work of art, and the first of its kind attempted in the language, it may be considered as a monument of the taste and skill of the authors. Its merit is confined to the regularity of the plot and metre, to its general good sense, and strict attention to common decorum. If the poet has not stamped the peculiar genius of his age upon this first attempt, it is no inconsiderable proof of strength of mind and conception sustained by its own sense of propriety alone, to have so far anticipated the taste of succeeding times, as to have avoided any glaring offence against rules and models, which had no existence in his day. Or perhaps a truer solution might be, that there were as yet no examples of a more ambiguous and irregular kind to tempt him to err, and as he had not the impulse or resources within himself to strike out a new path, he merely adhered with modesty and caution to the classical models with which, as a scholar, he was well acquainted. The language of the dialogue is clear, unaffected, and intelligible without the smallest difficulty, even to this day; it has 'no figures nor no fantasies,' to which the most fastidious critic can object, but the dramatic power is nearly none at all. It is written expressly to set forth the dangers and mischiefs that arise from the division of sovereign power; and the several speakers dilate upon the different views of the subject in turn, like clever schoolboys set to compose a thesis, or declaim upon the fatal consequences of ambition, and the uncertainty of human affairs. The author, in the end, declares for the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; a doctrine which indeed was seldom questioned at that time of day. Eubulus, one of the old king's counsellors, thus gives his opinion—

> 'Eke fully with the duke my mind agrees,
> That no cause serves, whereby the subject may
> Call to account the doings of his prince;
> Much less in blood by sword to work revenge:
> No more than may the hand cut off the head.
> In act nor speech, no nor in secret thought,
> The subject may rebel against his lord,
> Or judge of him that sits in Cæsar's seat,
> With grudging mind to damn those he mislikes.
> Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
> Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.'

Yet how little he was borne out in this inference by the unbiassed dictates of his own mind, may appear from the freedom and unguarded

boldness of such lines as the following, addressed by a favourite to a prince, as courtly advice.

> 'Know ye that lust of kingdoms hath no law:
> The Gods do bear and well allow in kings
> The things that they abhor in rascal routs.
> When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,
> And then in cruel and unkindly wise
> Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,
> The spoil of towns, ruins of mighty realms;
> Think you such princes do suppose themselves
> Subject to laws of kind and fear of Gods?
> Murders and violent thefts in private men
> Are heinous crimes, and full of foul reproach;
> Yet none offence, but deck'd with noble name
> Of glorious conquests in the hands of kings.'

The principal characters make as many invocations to the names of their children, their country, and their friends, as Cicero in his Orations, and all the topics insisted upon are open, direct, urged in the face of day, with no more attention to time or place, to an enemy who overhears, or an accomplice to whom they are addressed; in a word, with no more dramatic insinuation or byeplay than the pleadings in a court of law. Almost the only passage that I can instance, as rising above this didactic tone of mediocrity into the pathos of poetry, is one where Marcella laments the untimely death of her lover, Ferrex.

> 'Ah! noble prince, how oft have I beheld
> Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,
> Shining in armour bright before the tilt;
> And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,
> And charge thy staff to please thy lady's eye,
> That bowed the head-piece of thy friendly foe!
> How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace,
> How oft in arms on foot to break the sword,
> Which never now these eyes may see again!'

There seems a reference to Chaucer in the wording of the following lines—

> 'Then saw I how he smiled with slaying knife
> Wrapp'd under cloke, then saw I deep deceit
> Lurk in his face, and death prepared for me.'[1]

Sir Philip Sidney says of this tragedy: 'Gorboduc is full of stately speeches, and well sounding phrases, climbing to the height of

[1] 'The smiler with the knife under his cloke.'
Knight's Tale.

Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality; which it doth most delightfully teach, and thereby obtain the very end of poetry.' And Mr. Pope, whose taste in such matters was very different from Sir Philip Sidney's, says in still stronger terms: 'That the writers of the succeeding age might have improved as much in other respects, by copying from him a propriety in the sentiments, an unaffected perspicuity of style, and an easy flow in the numbers. In a word, that chastity, correctness, and gravity of style, which are so essential to tragedy, and which all the tragic poets who followed, not excepting Shakespear himself, either little understood, or perpetually neglected.' It was well for us and them that they did so!

The Induction to the Mirrour for Magistrates does his Muse more credit. It sometimes reminds one of Chaucer, and at others seems like an anticipation, in some degree, both of the measure and manner of Spenser. The following stanzas may give the reader an idea of the merit of this old poem, which was published in 1563.

'By him lay heauie Sleepe cosin of Death
Flat on the ground, and still as any stone,
A very corps, saue yeelding forth a breath.
Small keepe tooke he whom Fortune frowned on,
Or whom she lifted vp into the throne
Of high renowne, but as a liuing death,
So dead aliue, of life he drew the breath.

The bodies rest, the quiet of the hart,
The trauailes ease, the still nights feere was he.
And of our life in earth the better part,
Reuer of sight, and yet in whom we see
Things oft that tide, and oft that neuer bee.
Without respect esteeming equally
King *Crœsus* pompe, and *Irus* pouertie.

And next in order sad Old Age we found,
His beard all hoare, his eyes hollow and blind,
With drouping cheere still poring on the ground,
As on the place where nature him assign'd
To rest, when that the sisters had vntwin'd
His vitall thred, and ended with their knife
The fleeting course of fast declining life.

There heard we him with broke and hollow plaint
Rew with himselfe his end approaching fast,
And all for naught his wretched mind torment,
With sweete remembrance of his pleasures past,
And fresh delites of lustic youth forewast.
Recounting which, how would he sob and shreek?
And to be yong again of *Ioue* beseeke.

But and the cruell fates so fixed be,
That time forepast cannot returne againe,
This one request of *Ioue* yet prayed he:
That in such withred plight, and wretched paine,
As *eld* (accompanied with lothsome traine)
Had brought on him, all were it woe and griefe,
He might a while yet linger forth his life,

And not so soone descend into the pit:
Where Death, when he the mortall corps hath slaine,
With wretchlesse hand in graue doth couer it,
Thereafter neuer to enioy againe
The gladsome light, but in the ground ylaine,
In depth of darknesse waste and weare to nought,
As he had nere into the world been brought.

But who had seene him, sobbing how he stood
Vnto himselfe, and how he would bemone
His youth forepast, as though it wrought him good
To talke of youth, all were his youth foregone,
He would haue musde and maruail'd much whereon
This wretched Age should life desire so faine,
And knowes ful wel life doth but length his paine.

Crookebackt he was, toothshaken, and blere eyde,
Went on three feete, and sometime crept on foure,
With old lame bones, that ratled by his side,
His scalpe all pil'd, and he with eld forelore:
His withred fist still knocking at Deaths dore,
Fumbling and driueling as he drawes his breath,
For briefe, the shape and messenger of Death.'

John Lyly (born in the Weold of Kent about the year 1553), was the author of Midas and Endymion, of Alexander and Campaspe, and of the comedy of Mother Bombie. Of the last it may be said, that it is very much what its name would import, old, quaint, and vulgar.—I may here observe, once for all, that I would not be understood to say, that the age of Elizabeth was all of gold without any alloy. There was both gold and lead in it, and often in one and the same writer. In our impatience to form an opinion, we conclude, when we first meet with a good thing, that it is owing to the age; or, if we meet with a bad one, it is characteristic of the age, when, in fact, it is neither; for there are good and bad in almost all ages, and one age excels in one thing, another in another:—only one age may excel more and in higher things than another, but none can excel equally and completely in all. The writers of Elizabeth, as poets, soared to the height they did, by indulging their own unrestrained enthusiasm: as comic writers, they chiefly copied the manners of the

age, which did not give them the same advantage over their successors. Lyly's comedy, for instance, is 'poor, unfledged, has never winged from view o' th' nest,' and tries in vain to rise above the ground with crude conceits and clumsy levity. Lydia, the heroine of the piece, is silly enough, if the rest were but as witty. But the author has shewn no partiality in the distribution of his gifts. To say truth, it was a very common fault of the old comedy, that its humours were too low, and the weaknesses exposed too great to be credible, or an object of ridicule, even if they were. The affectation of their courtiers is passable, and diverting as a contrast to present manners; but the eccentricities of their clowns are 'very tolerable, and not to be endured.' Any kind of activity of mind might seem to the writers better than none: any nonsense served to amuse their hearers; any cant phrase, any coarse allusion, any pompous absurdity, was taken for wit and drollery. Nothing could be too mean, too foolish, too improbable, or too offensive, to be a proper subject for laughter. Any one (looking hastily at this side of the question only) might be tempted to suppose the youngest children of Thespis a very callow brood, chirping their slender notes, or silly swains 'grating their lean and flashy jests on scrannel pipes of wretched straw.' The genius of comedy looked too often like a lean and hectic pantaloon; love was a slip-shod shepherdess; wit a parti-coloured fool like Harlequin, and the plot came hobbling, like a clown, after all. A string of impertinent and farcical jests (or rather blunders), was with great formality ushered into the world as 'a right pleasant and conceited comedy.' Comedy could not descend lower than it sometimes did, without glancing at physical imperfections and deformity. The two young persons in the play before us, on whom the event of the plot chiefly hinges, do in fact turn out to be no better than changelings and natural idiots. This is carrying innocence and simplicity too far. So again, the character of Sir Tophas in Endymion, an affected, blustering, talkative, cowardly pretender, treads too near upon blank stupidity and downright want of common sense, to be admissible as a butt for satire. Shakespear has contrived to clothe the lamentable nakedness of the same sort of character with a motley garb from the wardrobe of his imagination, and has redeemed it from insipidity by a certain plausibility of speech, and playful extravagance of humour. But the undertaking was nearly desperate. Ben Jonson tried to overcome the difficulty by the force of learning and study: and thought to gain his end by persisting in error; but he only made matters worse; for his clowns and coxcombs (if we except Bobadil), are the most incorrigible and insufferable of all others.—The story of Mother Bombie is little else than a tissue of absurd mistakes, arising from the confusion of the

different characters one with another, like another Comedy of Errors, and ends in their being (most of them), married in a game at cross-purposes to the persons they particularly dislike.

To leave this, and proceed to something pleasanter, Midas and Endymion, which are worthy of their names and of the subject. The story in both is classical, and the execution is for the most part elegant and simple. There is often something that reminds one of the graceful communicativeness of Lucian or of Apuleius, from whom one of the stories is borrowed. Lyly made a more attractive picture of Grecian manners at second-hand, than of English characters from his own observation. The poet (which is the great merit of a poet in such a subject) has transported himself to the scene of action, to ancient Greece or Asia Minor; the manners, the images, the traditions are preserved with truth and delicacy, and the dialogue (to my fancy) glides and sparkles like a clear stream from the Muses' spring. I know few things more perfect in characteristic painting, than the exclamation of the Phrygian shepherds, who, afraid of betraying the secret of Midas's ears, fancy that 'the very reeds bow down, as though they listened to their talk'; nor more affecting in sentiment, than the apostrophe addressed by his friend Eumenides to Endymion, on waking from his long sleep, 'Behold the twig to which thou laidest down thy head, is now become a tree.' The narrative is sometimes a little wandering and desultory; but if it had been ten times as tedious, this thought would have redeemed it; for I cannot conceive of any thing more beautiful, more simple or touching, than this exquisitely chosen image and dumb proof of the manner in which he had passed his life, from youth to old age, in a dream, a dream of love. Happy Endymion! Faithful Eumenides! Divine Cynthia! Who would not wish to pass his life in such a sleep, a long, long sleep, dreaming of some fair heavenly Goddess, with the moon shining upon his face, and the trees growing silently over his head!—There is something in this story which has taken a strange hold of my fancy, perhaps 'out of my weakness and my melancholy'; but for the satisfaction of the reader, I will quote the whole passage: 'it is silly sooth, and dallies with the innocence of love, like the old age.'

'*Cynthia.* Well, let us to Endymion. I will not be so stately (good Endymion) not to stoop to do thee good; and if thy liberty consist in a kiss from me, thou shalt have it. And although my mouth hath been heretofore as untouched as my thoughts, yet now to recover thy life (though to restore thy youth it be impossible) I will do that to Endymion, which yet never mortal man could boast of heretofore, nor shall ever hope for hereafter. (*She kisses him*).

Eumenides. Madam, he beginneth to stir.

Cynthia. Soft, Eumenides, stand still.

Eumenides. Ah! I see his eyes almost open.

Cynthia. I command thee once again, stir not: I will stand behind him.

Panelion. What do I see? Endymion almost awake?

Eumenides. Endymion, Endymion, art thou deaf or dumb? Or hath this long sleep taken away thy memory? Ah! my sweet Endymion, seest thou not Eumenides, thy faithful friend, thy faithful Eumenides, who for thy sake hath been careless of his own content? Speak, Endymion! Endymion! Endymion!

Endymion. Endymion! I call to mind such a name.

Eumenides. Hast thou forgotten thyself, Endymion? Then do I not marvel thou rememberest not thy friend. I tell thee thou art Endymion, and I Eumenides. Behold also Cynthia, by whose favour thou art awaked, and by whose virtue thou shalt continue thy natural course.

Cynthia. Endymion! Speak, sweet Endymion! Knowest thou not Cynthia?

Endymion. Oh, heavens! whom do I behold? Fair Cynthia, divine Cynthia?

Cynthia. I am Cynthia, and thou Endymion.

Endymion. Endymion! What do I hear? What! a grey beard, hollow eyes, withered body, and decayed limbs, and all in one night?

Eumenides. One night! Thou hast slept here forty years, by what enchantress, as yet it is not known: and behold the twig to which thou laidest thy head, is now become a tree. Callest thou not Eumenides to remembrance?

Endymion. Thy name I do remember by the sound, but thy favour I do not yet call to mind: only divine Cynthia, to whom time, fortune, death, and destiny are subject, I see and remember; and in all humility, I regard and reverence.

Cynthia. You shall have good cause to remember Eumenides, who hath for thy safety forsaken his own solace.

Endymion. Am I that Endymion, who was wont in court to lead my life, and in justs, tourneys, and arms, to exercise my youth? Am I that Endymion?

Eumenides. Thou art that Endymion, and I Eumenides: wilt thou not yet call me to remembrance?

Endymion. Ah! sweet Eumenides, I now perceive thou art he, and that myself have the name of Endymion; but that this should be my body, I doubt: for how could my curled locks be turned to gray hair, and my strong body to a dying weakness, having waxed old, and not knowing it?

Cynthia. Well, Endymion, arise: awhile sit down, for that thy limbs are stiff and not able to stay thee, and tell what thou hast seen in thy sleep all this while. What dreams, visions, thoughts, and fortunes: for it is impossible but in so long time, thou shouldst see strange things.'

Act V. Scene 1.

It does not take away from the pathos of this poetical allegory on the chances of love and the progress of human life, that it may be

supposed to glance indirectly at the conduct of Queen Elizabeth to our author, who, after fourteen years' expectation of the place of Master of the Revels, was at last disappointed. This princess took no small delight in keeping her poets in a sort of Fool's Paradise. The wit of Lyly, in parts of this romantic drama, seems to have grown spirited and classical with his subject. He puts this fine hyperbolical irony in praise of Dipsas, (a most unamiable personage, as it will appear), into the mouth of Sir Tophas:

'Oh what fine thin hair hath Dipsas! What a pretty low forehead! What a tall and stately nose! What little hollow eyes! What great and goodly lips! How harmless she is, being toothless! Her fingers fat and short, adorned with long nails like a bittern! What a low stature she is, and yet what a great foot she carrieth! How thrifty must she be, in whom there is no waist; how virtuous she is like to be, over whom no man can be jealous!' *Act III. Scene* 3.

It is singular that the style of this author, which is extremely sweet and flowing, should have been the butt of ridicule to his contemporaries, particularly Drayton, who compliments Sidney as the author that

'Did first reduce
Our tongue from Lyly's writing, then in use;
Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
Playing with words and idle similes,
As the English apes and very zanies be
Of every thing that they do hear and see.'

Which must apply to the prose style of his work, called '*Euphues and his England*,' and is much more like Sir Philip Sidney's own manner, than the dramatic style of our poet. Besides the passages above quoted, I might refer to the opening speeches of Midas, and again to the admirable contention between Pan and Apollo for the palm of music.—His Alexander and Campaspe is another sufficient answer to the charge. This play is a very pleasing transcript of old manners and sentiment. It is full of sweetness and point, of Attic salt and the honey of Hymettus. The following song given to Apelles, would not disgrace the mouth of the prince of painters:

'Cupid and my Campaspe play'd
At cards for kisses, Cupid paid;
He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows;
His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;
Loses them too, then down he throws
The coral of his lip, the rose
Growing on 's cheek (but none knows how)
With these the chrystal of his brow,

I 'll have them read me strange philosophy,
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings:
I 'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg;
I 'll have them fill the public schools with skill,
Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad;
I 'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all the provinces:
Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war
Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp bridge,
I 'll make my servile spirits to invent.

Enter Valdes *and* Cornelius.

Come, German Valdes, and Cornelius,
And make me blest with your sage conference.
Valdes, sweet Valdes, and Cornelius,
Know that your words have won me at the last,
To practice magic and concealed arts.
Philosophy is odious and obscure;
Both Law and Physic are for petty wits;
'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.
Then, gentle friends, aid me in this attempt;
And I, that have with subtile syllogisms
Gravell'd the pastors of the German church,
And made the flow'ring pride of Wittenberg
Swarm to my problems, as th' infernal spirits
On sweet Musæus when he came to hell;
Will be as cunning as Agrippa was,
Whose shadow made all Europe honour him.

Valdes. These books, thy wit, and our experience
Shall make all nations to canonize us.
As Indian Moors obey their Spanish lords,
So shall the Spirits of every element
Be always serviceable to us three.
Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
Like Almain Rutters with their horsemen's staves,
Or Lapland giants trotting by our sides:
Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
From Venice they shall drag whole argosies,
And from America the golden fleece,
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury;[1]
If learned Faustus will be resolute.

Faustus. As resolute am I in this
As thou to live, therefore object it not.'

[1] An anachronism.

In his colloquy with the fallen angel, he shews the fixedness of his determination :—

> 'What is great Mephostophilis so passionate
> For being deprived of the joys of heaven ?
> Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
> And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.'

Yet we afterwards find him faltering in his resolution, and struggling with the extremity of his fate.

> 'My heart is harden'd, I cannot repent:
> Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven:
> Swords, poisons, halters, and envenom'd steel
> Are laid before me to dispatch myself;
> And long ere this I should have done the deed,
> Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
> Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death ?
> And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
> With ravishing sounds of his melodious harp,
> Made music with my Mephostophilis ?
> Why should I die then or basely despair ?
> I am resolv'd, Faustus shall not repent.
> Come, Mephostophilis, let us dispute again,
> And reason of divine astrology.'

There is one passage more of this kind, which is so striking and beautiful, so like a rapturous and deeply passionate dream, that I cannot help quoting it here: it is the Address to the Apparition of Helen.

> '*Enter* Helen *again, passing over between two Cupids.*
>
> *Faustus.* Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
> And burned the topless tow'rs of Ilium ?
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
> Her lips suck forth my soul ! See where it flies.
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for Heav'n is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.
> I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
> Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sack'd ;
> And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
> And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
> Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
> And then return to Helen for a kiss.
> —Oh ! thou art fairer than the evening air,
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars:
> Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,

When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.'

The ending of the play is terrible, and his last exclamations betray an anguish of mind and vehemence of passion, not to be contemplated without shuddering.

—'Oh, Faustus!
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heav'n,
That time may cease, and midnight never come.
Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but a year,
A month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent, and save his soul.

(*The Clock strikes Twelve.*)

It strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
Oh soul! be chang'd into small water-drops,
And fall into the ocean; ne'er be found.

(*Thunder. Enter the* Devils.)

Oh! mercy, Heav'n! Look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!—
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Oh! Mephostophilis.'

Perhaps the finest *trait* in the whole play, and that which softens and subdues the horror of it, is the interest taken by the two scholars in the fate of their master, and their unavailing attempts to dissuade him from his relentless career. The regard to learning is the ruling passion of this drama; and its indications are as mild and amiable in them as its ungoverned pursuit has been fatal to Faustus.

'Yet, for he was a scholar once admir'd
For wondrous knowledge in our German schools,
We 'll give his mangled limbs due burial;
And all the students, clothed in mourning black,
Shall wait upon his heavy funeral.'

So the Chorus:

'Cut is the branch that might have grown full strait,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man.'

And still more affecting are his own conflicts of mind and agonising doubts on this subject just before, when he exclaims to his friends; 'Oh, gentlemen! Hear me with patience, and tremble not at my speeches. Though my heart pant and quiver to remember that I have been a student here these thirty years; oh! would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!' A finer compliment was never paid, nor a finer lesson ever read to the pride of learning.—The intermediate comic parts, in which Faustus is not directly concerned, are mean and grovelling to the last degree. One of the Clowns says to another: 'Snails! what hast got there? A book? Why thou can'st not tell ne'er a word on't.' Indeed, the ignorance and barbarism of the time, as here described, might almost justify Faustus's overstrained admiration of learning, and turn the heads of those who possessed it, from novelty and unaccustomed excitement, as the Indians are made drunk with wine! Goethe, the German poet, has written a drama on this tradition of his country, which is considered a master-piece. I cannot find, in Marlowe's play, any proofs of the atheism or impiety attributed to him, unless the belief in witchcraft and the Devil can be regarded as such; and at the time he wrote, not to have believed in both, would have been construed into the rankest atheism and irreligion. There is a delight, as Mr. Lamb says, 'in dallying with interdicted subjects'; but that does not, by any means, imply either a practical or speculative disbelief of them.

Lust's Dominion; *or*, the Lascivious Queen, is referable to the same general style of writing; and is a striking picture, or rather caricature, of the unrestrained love of power, not as connected with learning, but with regal ambition and external sway. There is a good deal of the same intense passion, the same recklessness of purpose, the same smouldering fire within: but there is not any of the same relief to the mind in the lofty imaginative nature of the subject; and the continual repetition of plain practical villainy and undigested horrors disgusts the sense, and blunts the interest. The mind is hardened into obduracy, not melted into sympathy, by such bare-faced and barbarous cruelty. Eleazar, the Moor, is such another character as Aaron in Titus Andronicus, and this play might be set down without injustice as 'pue-fellow' to that. I should think Marlowe has a much fairer claim to be the author of Titus Andronicus than Shakespear, at least from internal evidence; and the argument of Schlegel, that it must have been Shakespear's, because there was no one else capable of producing either its faults or beauties, fails in each particular. The Queen is the same character in both these plays; and the business of the plot is carried on in much the same revolting manner, by making the nearest friends and relatives of the wretched

victims the instruments of their sufferings and persecution by an arch-villain. To shew however, that the same strong-braced tone of passionate declamation is kept up, take the speech of Eleazar on refusing the proffered crown:

'What do none rise?
No, no, for kings indeed are Deities. * * * *
And who 'd not (as the sun) in brightness shine?
To be the greatest is to be divine.
Who among millions would not be the mightiest?
To sit in godlike state; to have all eyes
Dazzled with admiration, and all tongues
Shouting loud prayers; to rob every heart
Of love; to have the strength of every arm;
A sovereign's name, why 'tis a sovereign charm.
This glory round about me hath thrown beams:
I have stood upon the top of Fortune's wheel,
And backward turn'd the iron screw of fate.
The destinies have spun a silken thread
About my life; yet thus I cast aside
The shape of majesty, and on my knee
To this Imperial state lowly resign
This usurpation; wiping off your fears
Which stuck so hard upon me.'

This is enough to shew the unabated vigour of the author's style. This strain is certainly doing justice to the pride of ambition, and the imputed majesty of kings.

We have heard much of 'Marlowe's mighty line,' and this play furnishes frequent instances of it. There are a number of single lines that seem struck out in the heat of a glowing fancy, and leave a track of golden fire behind them. The following are a few that might be given.

'I know he is not dead; I know proud death
Durst not behold such sacred majesty.'

* * * * *

'Hang both your greedy ears upon my lips,
Let them devour my speech, suck in my breath.'

* * * * *

——'From discontent grows treason,
And on the stalk of treason, death.'

* * * * *

'Tyrants swim safest in a crimson flood.'

* * * * *

The two following lines—

'Oh! I grow dull, and the cold hand of sleep
Hath thrust his icy fingers in my breast'—

are the same as those in King John—

'And none of you will bid the winter come
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw.'

and again the Moor's exclamation,

'Now by the proud complexion of my cheeks,
Ta'en from the kisses of the amorous sun'—

is the same as Cleopatra's—

'But I that am with Phœbus' amorous pinches black'—&c.

Eleazar's sarcasm,

——'These dignities,
Like poison, make men swell; this rat's-bane honour,
Oh, 'tis so sweet! they 'll lick it till they burst'—

shews the utmost virulence of smothered spleen; and his concluding strain of malignant exultation has been but tamely imitated by Young's Zanga.

'Now tragedy, thou minion of the night,
Rhamnusia's pewfellow,[1] to thee I 'll sing,
Upon a harp made of dead Spanish bones,
The proudest instrument the world affords:
To thee that never blushest, though thy cheeks
Are full of blood, O Saint Revenge, to thee
I consecrate my murders, all my stabs,' &c.

It may be worth while to observe, for the sake of the curious, that many of Marlowe's most sounding lines consist of monosyllables, or nearly so. The repetition of Eleazar's taunt to the Cardinal, retorting his own words upon him, 'Spaniard or Moor, the saucy slave shall die'—may perhaps have suggested Falconbridge's spirited reiteration of the phrase—'And hang a calve's skin on his recreant limbs.'

I do not think THE RICH JEW OF MALTA so characteristic a specimen of this writer's powers. It has not the same fierce glow of passion or expression. It is extreme in act, and outrageous in plot and catastrophe; but it has not the same vigorous filling up. The author seems to have relied on the horror inspired by the subject, and the national disgust excited against the principal character, to rouse the feelings of the audience: for the rest, it is a tissue of gratuitous, unprovoked, and incredible atrocities, which are committed, one upon

[1] This expression seems to be ridiculed by Falstaff.

the back of the other, by the parties concerned, without motive, passion, or object. There are, notwithstanding, some striking passages in it, as Barabbas's description of the bravo, Philia Borzo [1]; the relation of his own unaccountable villainies to Ithamore; his rejoicing over his recovered jewels 'as the morning lark sings over her young;' and the backwardness he declares in himself to forgive the Christian injuries that are offered him,[2] which may have given the idea of one of Shylock's speeches, where he ironically disclaims any enmity to the merchants on the same account. It is perhaps hardly fair to compare the Jew of Malta with the Merchant of Venice; for it is evident, that Shakespear's genius shews to as much advantage in knowledge of character, in variety and stage-effect, as it does in point of general humanity.

[1] 'He sent a shaggy, tattered, staring slave,
That when he speaks, draws out his grisly beard,
And winds it twice or thrice about his ear;
Whose face has been a grind-stone for men's swords:
His hands are hack'd, some fingers cut quite off,
Who when he speaks, grunts like a hog, and looks
Like one that is employ'd in catzerie,
And cross-biting; such a rogue
As is the husband to a hundred whores;
And I by him must send three hundred crowns.'

Act IV.

[2] 'In spite of these swine-eating Christians
(Unchosen nation, never circumcised;
Such poor villains as were ne'er thought upon,
Till Titus and Vespasian conquer'd us)
Am I become as wealthy as I was.
They hoped my daughter would have been a nun;
But she's at home, and I have bought a house
As great and fair as is the Governor's:
And there, in spite of Malta, will I dwell,
Having Ferneze's hand; whose heart I'll have,
Aye, and his son's too, or it shall go hard.

I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
That can so soon forget an injury.
We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite; yet are our looks
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
I learn'd in Florence how to kiss my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
And duck as low as any bare-foot Friar:
Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
Or else be gather'd for in our synagogue,
That when the offering bason comes to me,
Even for charity I may spit into it.'

ON LYLY, MARLOW, HEYWOOD, ETC.

Edward II. is, according to the modern standard of composition, Marlowe's best play. It is written with few offences against the common rules, and in a succession of smooth and flowing lines. The poet however succeeds less in the voluptuous and effeminate descriptions which he here attempts, than in the more dreadful and violent bursts of passion. Edward II. is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect. The management of the plot is feeble and desultory; little interest is excited in the various turns of fate; the characters are too worthless, have too little energy, and their punishment is, in general, too well deserved, to excite our commiseration; so that this play will bear, on the whole, but a distant comparison with Shakespear's Richard II. in conduct, power, or effect. But the death of Edward II. in Marlow's tragedy, is certainly superior to that of Shakespear's King; and in heart-breaking distress, and the sense of human weakness, claiming pity from utter helplessness and conscious misery, is not surpassed by any writer whatever.

'*Edward.* Weep'st thou already? List awhile to me,
And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,
Or as Matrevis, hewn from the Caucasus,
Yet will it melt ere I have done my tale.
This dungeon, where they keep me, is the sink
Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.
Lightborn. Oh villains.
Edward. And here in mire and puddle have I stood
This ten days' space; and lest that I should sleep,
One plays continually upon a drum.
They give me bread and water, being a king;
So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,
My mind 's distempered, and my body 's numbed:
And whether I have limbs or no, I know not.
Oh! would my blood drop out from every vein,
As doth this water from my tatter'd robes!
Tell Isabel, the Queen, I look'd not thus,
When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
And there unhors'd the Duke of Cleremont.'

There are some excellent passages scattered up and down. The description of the King and Gaveston looking out of the palace window, and laughing at the courtiers as they pass, and that of the different spirit shewn by the lion and the forest deer, when wounded, are among the best. The Song 'Come, live with me and be my love,' to which Sir Walter Raleigh wrote an answer, is Marlowe's.

Heywood I shall mention next, as a direct contrast to Marlowe in everything but the smoothness of his verse. As Marlowe's imagination glows like a furnace, Heywood's is a gentle, lambent flame that

purifies without consuming. His manner is simplicity itself. There is nothing supernatural, nothing startling, or terrific. He makes use of the commonest circumstances of every-day life, and of the easiest tempers, to shew the workings, or rather the inefficacy of the passions, the *vis inertiæ* of tragedy. His incidents strike from their very familiarity, and the distresses he paints invite our sympathy, from the calmness and resignation with which they are borne. The pathos might be deemed purer from its having no mixture of turbulence or vindictiveness in it; and in proportion as the sufferers are made to deserve a better fate. In the midst of the most untoward reverses and cutting injuries, good-nature and good sense keep their accustomed sway. He describes men's errors with tenderness, and their duties only with zeal, and the heightenings of a poetic fancy. His style is equally natural, simple, and unconstrained. The dialogue (bating the verse), is such as might be uttered in ordinary conversation. It is beautiful prose put into heroic measure. It is not so much that he uses the common English idiom for everything (for that I think the most poetical and impassioned of our elder dramatists do equally), but the simplicity of the characters, and the equable flow of the sentiments do not require or suffer it to be warped from the tone of level speaking, by figurative expressions, or hyperbolical allusions. A few scattered exceptions occur now and then, where the hectic flush of passion forces them from the lips, and they are not the worse for being rare. Thus, in the play called A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS, Wendoll, when reproached by Mrs. Frankford with his obligations to her husband, interrupts her hastily, by saying

> ——'Oh speak no more!
> For more than this I know, and have recorded
> Within the *red-leaved table* of my heart.'

And further on, Frankford, when doubting his wife's fidelity, says, with less feeling indeed, but with much elegance of fancy,

> 'Cold drops of sweat sit dangling on my hairs,
> Like morning dew upon the golden flow'rs.'

So also, when returning to his house at midnight to make the fatal discovery, he exclaims,

> ——'Astonishment,
> Fear, and amazement beat upon my heart,
> Even as a madman beats upon a drum.'

It is the reality of things present to their imaginations, that makes these writers so fine, so bold, and yet so true in what they describe.

Nature lies open to them like a book, and was not to them 'invisible, or dimly seen' through a veil of words and filmy abstractions. Such poetical ornaments are however to be met with at considerable intervals in this play, and do not disturb the calm serenity and domestic simplicity of the author's style. The conclusion of Wendoll's declaration of love to Mrs. Frankford may serve as an illustration of its general merits, both as to thought and diction.

> 'Fair, and of all beloved, I was not fearful
> Bluntly to give my life into your hand,
> And at one hazard, all my earthly means.
> Go, tell your husband: he will turn me off,
> And I am then undone. I care not, I;
> 'Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he 'll kill me;
> I care not; 'twas for you. Say I incur
> The general name of villain thro' the world,
> Of traitor to my friend: I care not, I;
> Poverty, shame, death, scandal, and reproach,
> For you I 'll hazard all: why what care I?
> For you I love, and for your love I 'll die.'

The affecting remonstrance of Frankford to his wife, and her repentant agony at parting with him, are already before the public, in Mr. Lamb's Specimens. The winding up of this play is rather awkwardly managed, and the moral is, according to established usage, equivocal. It required only Frankford's reconciliation to his wife, as well as his forgiveness of her, for the highest breach of matrimonial duty, to have made a Woman Killed with Kindness a complete anticipation of the Stranger. Heywood, however, was in that respect but half a Kotzebue!—The view here given of country manners is truly edifying. As in the higher walk of tragedy we see the manners and moral sentiments of kings and nobles of former times, here we have the feuds and amiable qualities of country 'squires and their relatives; and such as were the rulers, such were their subjects. The frequent quarrels and ferocious habits of private life are well exposed in the fatal rencounter between Sir Francis Acton and Sir Charles Mountford about a hawking match, in the ruin and rancorous persecution of the latter in consequence, and in the hard, unfeeling, cold-blooded treatment he receives in his distress from his own relations, and from a fellow of the name of Shafton. After reading the sketch of this last character, who is introduced as a mere ordinary personage, the representative of a class, without any preface or apology, no one can doubt the credibility of that of Sir Giles Over-reach, who is professedly held up (I should think almost unjustly) as a prodigy of grasping and hardened selfishness. The influence of philosophy

and prevalence of abstract reasoning, if it has done nothing for our poetry, has done, I should hope, something for our manners. The callous declaration of one of these unconscionable churls,

'This is no world in which to pity men,'

might have been taken as a motto for the good old times in general, and with a very few reservations, if Heywood has not grossly libelled them.—Heywood's plots have little of artifice or regularity of design to recommend them. He writes on carelessly, as it happens, and trusts to Nature, and a certain happy tranquillity of spirit, for gaining the favour of the audience. He is said, besides attending to his duties as an actor, to have composed regularly a sheet a day. This may account in some measure for the unembarrassed facility of his style. His own account makes the number of his writings for the stage, or those in which he had a main hand, upwards of 200. In fact, I do not wonder at any quantity that an author is said to have written; for the more a man writes, the more he can write.

The same remarks will apply, with certain modifications, to other remaining works of this writer, the Royal King and Loyal Subject, a Challenge for Beauty, and the English Traveller. The barb of misfortune is sheathed in the mildness of the writer's temperament, and the story jogs on very comfortably, without effort or resistance, to the *euthanasia* of the catastrophe. In two of these, the person principally aggrieved survives, and feels himself none the worse for it. The most splendid passage in Heywood's comedies is the account of Shipwreck by Drink, in the English Traveller, which was the foundation of Cowley's Latin Poem, *Naufragium Joculare*.

The names of Middleton and Rowley, with which I shall conclude this Lecture, generally appear together as two writers who frequently combined their talents in the production of joint-pieces. Middleton (judging from their separate works) was 'the more potent spirit' of the two; but they were neither of them equal to some others. Rowley appears to have excelled in describing a certain amiable quietness of disposition and disinterested tone of morality, carried almost to a paradoxical excess, as in his Fair Quarrel, and in the comedy of A Woman never Vexed, which is written, in many parts, with a pleasing simplicity and *naiveté* equal to the novelty of the conception. Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences common to his contemporaries. In his Women Beware Women, there is a rich marrowy vein of internal sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature, and cool cutting irony of expression. He is lamentably deficient in the plot and denouement

of the story. It is like the rough draught of a tragedy, with a number of fine things thrown in, and the best made use of first; but it tends to no fixed goal, and the interest decreases, instead of increasing, as we read on, for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole. We have fine studies of heads, a piece of richly-coloured drapery, 'a foot, an hand, an eye from Nature drawn, that 's worth a history'; but the groups are ill disposed, nor are the figures proportioned to each other or the size of the canvas. The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in possession of excellent materials, which he husbands very ill. This character, though it applies more particularly to Middleton, might be applied generally to the age. Shakespear alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it. He saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of Nature and the impression of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design.—The characters of Livia, of Bianca, of Leantio and his Mother, in the play of which I am speaking, are all admirably drawn. The art and malice of Livia shew equal want of principle and acquaintance with the world; and the scene in which she holds the mother in suspense, while she betrays the daughter into the power of the profligate Duke, is a master-piece of dramatic skill. The proneness of Bianca to tread the primrose path of pleasure, after she has made the first false step, and her sudden transition from unblemished virtue to the most abandoned vice, in which she is notably seconded by her mother-in-law's ready submission to the temptations of wealth and power, form a true and striking picture. The first intimation of the intrigue that follows, is given in a way that is not a little remarkable for simplicity and acuteness. Bianca says,

> 'Did not the Duke look up? Methought he saw us.'

To which the more experienced mother answers,

> 'That 's every one's conceit that sees a Duke.
> If he looks stedfastly, he looks straight at them,
> When he perhaps, good careful gentleman,
> Never minds any, but the look he casts
> Is at his own intentions, and his object
> Only the public good.'

It turns out however, that he had been looking at them, and not 'at the public good.' The moral of this tragedy is rendered more impressive from the manly, independent character of Leantio in the

first instance, and the manner in which he dwells, in a sort of doting abstraction, on his own comforts, in being possessed of a beautiful and faithful wife. As he approaches his own house, and already treads on the brink of perdition, he exclaims with an exuberance of satisfaction not to be restrained—

'How near am I to a happiness
That earth exceeds not! Not another like it:
The treasures of the deep are not so precious,
As are the conceal'd comforts of a man
Lock'd up in woman's love. I scent the air
Of blessings when I come but near the house:
What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!
The violet-bed 's not sweeter. Honest wedlock
Is like a banquetting-house built in a garden,
On which the spring's chaste flowers take delight
To cast their modest odours; when base lust,
With all her powders, paintings, and best pride,
Is but a fair house built by a ditch side.
When I behold a glorious dangerous strumpet,
Sparkling in beauty and destruction too,
Both at a twinkling, I do liken straight
Her beautified body to a goodly temple
That 's built on vaults where carcasses lie rotting;
And so by little and little I shrink back again,
And quench desire with a cool meditation;
And I 'm as well, methinks. Now for a welcome
Able to draw men's envies upon man:
A kiss now that will hang upon my lip,
As sweet as morning dew upon a rose,
And full as long; after a five days' fast
She 'll be so greedy now and cling about me:
I take care how I shall be rid of her;
And here 't begins.'

This dream is dissipated by the entrance of Bianca and his Mother.

'*Bian.* Oh, sir, you 're welcome home.
Moth. Oh, is he come? I am glad on 't.
Lean. (*Aside.*) Is that all?
Why this is dreadful now as sudden death
To some rich man, that flatters all his sins
With promise of repentance when he 's old,
And dies in the midway before he comes to 't.
Sure you 're not well, Bianca! How dost, prithee?
Bian. I have been better than I am at this time.
Lean. Alas, I thought so.
Bian. Nay, I have been worse too,
Than now you see me, sir.

Lean. I 'm glad thou mendst yet,
I feel my heart mend too. How came it to thee?
Has any thing dislik'd thee in my absence?
Bian. No, certain, I have had the best content
That Florence can afford.
Lean. Thou makest the best on 't:
Speak, mother, what 's the cause? you must needs know.
Moth. Troth, I know none, son; let her speak herself;
Unless it be the same gave Lucifer a tumbling cast; that 's pride.
Bian. Methinks this house stands nothing to my mind;
I 'd have some pleasant lodging i' th' high street, sir;
Or if 'twere near the court, sir, that were much better;
'Tis a sweet recreation for a gentlewoman
To stand in a bay-window, and see gallants.
Lean. Now I have another temper, a mere stranger
To that of yours, it seems; I should delight
To see none but yourself.
Bian. I praise not that;
Too fond is as unseemly as too churlish:
I would not have a husband of that proneness,
To kiss me before company, for a world:
Beside, 'tis tedious to see one thing still, sir,
Be it the best that ever heart affected;
Nay, were 't yourself, whose love had power you know
To bring me from my friends, I would not stand thus,
And gaze upon you always; troth, I could not, sir;
As good be blind, and have no use of sight,
As look on one thing still: what 's the eye's treasure,
But change of objects? You are learned, sir,
And know I speak not ill; 'tis full as virtuous
For woman's eye to look on several men,
As for her heart, sir, to be fixed on one.
Lean. Now thou com'st home to me; a kiss for that word.
Bian. No matter for a kiss, sir; let it pass;
'Tis but a toy, we 'll not so much as mind it;
Let 's talk of other business, and forget it.
What news now of the pirates? any stirring?
Prithee discourse a little.
Moth. (*Aside.*) I am glad he 's here yet
To see her tricks himself; I had lied monst'rously
If I had told 'em first.
Lean. Speak, what 's the humour, sweet,
You make your lips so strange? This was not wont.
Bian. Is there no kindness betwixt man and wife,
Unless they make a pigeon-house of friendship,
And be still billing? 'tis the idlest fondness
That ever was invented; and 'tis pity
It 's grown a fashion for poor gentlewomen;
There 's many a disease kiss'd in a year by 't,

And a French court'sy made to't: Alas, sir,
Think of the world, how we shall live, grow serious;
We have been married a whole fortnight now.
Lean. How? a whole fortnight! why, is that so long?
Bian. 'Tis time to leave off dalliance; 'tis a doctrine
Of your own teaching, if you be remember'd,
And I was bound to obey it.
Moth. (*Aside.*) Here 's one fits him;
This was well catch'd i' faith, son, like a fellow
That rids another country of a plague,
And brings it home with him to his own house.

[*A Messenger from the Duke knocks within.*

Who knocks?
Lean. Who 's there now? Withdraw you, Bianca;
Thou art a gem no stranger's eye must see,
Howe'er thou 'rt pleas'd now to look dull on me.

[*Exit Bianca.*'

The Witch of Middleton is his most remarkable performance; both on its own account, and from the use that Shakespear has made of some of the characters and speeches in his Macbeth. Though the employment which Middleton has given to Hecate and the rest, in thwarting the purposes and perplexing the business of familiar and domestic life, is not so grand or appalling as the more stupendous agency which Shakespear has assigned them, yet it is not easy to deny the merit of the first invention to Middleton, who has embodied the existing superstitions of the time, respecting that anomalous class of beings, with a high spirit of poetry, of the most grotesque and fanciful kind. The songs and incantations made use of are very nearly the same. The other parts of this play are not so good; and the solution of the principal difficulty, by Antonio's falling down a trap-door, most lame and impotent. As a specimen of the similarity of the preternatural machinery, I shall here give one entire scene.

'*The Witches*' *Habitation.*

Enter Heccat, Stadlin, Hoppo, *and other Witches.*

Hec. The moon 's a gallant: see how brisk she rides.
Stad. Here 's a rich evening, Heccat.
Hec. Aye, is 't not, wenches,
To take a journey of five thousand miles?
Hop. Our's will be more to-night.
Hec. Oh, 'twill be precious. Heard you the owl yet?
Stad. Briefly, in the copse,
As we came thro' now.
Hec. 'Tis high time for us then.
Stad. There was a bat hung at my lips three times

As we came thro' the woods, and drank her fill:
Old Puckle saw her.
Hec. You are fortunate still,
The very scritch-owl lights upon your shoulder,
And woos you like a pidgeon. Are you furnish'd?
Have you your ointments?
Stad. All.
Hec. Prepare to flight then.
I 'll overtake you swiftly.
Stad. Hye then, Heccat!
We shall be up betimes.
Hec. I 'll reach you quickly. [*They ascend.*

Enter Firestone.

Fire. They are all going a birding to-night. They talk of fowls i' th' air, that fly by day, I 'm sure they 'll be a company of foul sluts there to-night. If we have not mortality affeared, I 'll be hang'd, for they are able to putrify it, to infect a whole region. She spies me now.
Hec. What, Firestone, our sweet son?
Fire. A little sweeter than some of you; or a dunghill were too good for me.
Hec. How much hast there?
Fire. Nineteen, and all brave plump ones; besides six lizards, and three serpentine eggs.
Hec. Dear and sweet boy! What herbs hast thou?
Fire. I have some mar-martin, and man-dragon.
Hec. Marmarittin, and mandragora, thou would'st say.
Fire. Here 's pannax, too. I thank thee; my pan akes, I am sure, with kneeling down to cut 'em.
Hec. And selago,
Hedge-hissop too! How near he goes my cuttings!
Were they all cropt by moon-light?
Fire. Every blade of 'em, or I 'm a moon-calf, mother.
Hec. Hie thee home with 'em.
Look well to th' house to-night: I 'm for aloft.
Fire. Aloft, quoth you! I would you would break your neck once, that I might have all quickly (*Aside*).—Hark, hark, mother! They are above the steeple already, flying over your head with a noise of musicians.
Hec. They are indeed. Help me! Help me! I 'm too late else.

SONG, (*in the air above*).

Come away, come away!
Heccat, Heccat, come away!
Hec. I come, I come, I come, I come,
With all the speed I may,
With all the speed I may.
Where 's Stadlin?
(*Above*). Here.

Hec. Where 's Puckle ?
(*Above*). Here :
And Hoppo too, and Hellwain too :
We lack but you, we lack but you.
Come away, make up the count !
Hec. I will but 'noint, and then I mount.

(*A Spirit descends in the shape of a Cat*).

(*Above*). There 's one come down to fetch his dues ;
A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood ;
And why thou stay'st so long, I muse, I muse,
Since th' air 's so sweet and good ?
Hec. Oh, art thou come,
What news, what news ?
Spirit. All goes still to our delight,
Either come, or else
Refuse, refuse.
Hec. Now I am furnish'd for the flight.
Fire. Hark, hark ! The cat sings a brave treble in her own language.
Hec. (*Ascending with the Spirit*).
Now I go, now I fly,
Malkin, my sweet spirit, and I.
Oh, what a dainty pleasure 'tis
To ride in the air
When the moon shines fair,
And sing, and dance, and toy, and kiss !
Over woods, high rocks, and mountains,
Over seas our mistress' fountains,
Over steep towers and turrets,
We fly by night, 'mongst troops of spirits.
No ring of bells to our ears sounds,
No howls of wolves, no yelp of hounds :
No, not the noise of water's breach,
Or cannon's roar, our height can reach.
(*Above*) No ring of bells, &c.
Fire. Well, mother, I thank you for your kindness. You must be gamboling i' th' air, and leave me here like a fool and a mortal. [*Exit.*'

The Incantation scene at the cauldron, is also the original of that in Macbeth, and is in like manner introduced by the Duchess's visiting the Witches' Habitation.

'*The Witches' Habitation.*

Enter Duchess, Heccat, Firestone.

Hec. What death is 't you desire for Almachildes ?
Duch. A sudden and a subtle.
Hec. Then I 've fitted you.
Here lie the gifts of both ; sudden and subtle ;

His picture made in wax, and gently molten
By a blue fire, kindled with dead men's eyes,
Will waste him by degrees.
Duch. In what time, pr'ythee?
Hec. Perhaps in a month's progress.
Duch. What? A month?
Out upon pictures! If they be so tedious,
Give me things with some life.
Hec. Then seek no farther.
Duch. This must be done with speed, dispatched this night,
If it may possibly.
Hec. I have it for you:
Here 's that will do 't. Stay but perfection's time,
And that 's not five hours hence.
Duch. Can'st thou do this?
Hec. Can I?
Duch. I mean, so closely.
Hec. So closely do you mean too?
Duch. So artfully, so cunningly.
Hec. Worse and worse; doubts and incredulities,
They make me mad. Let scrupulous creatures know,
Cum volui, ripis ipsis mirantibus, amnes
In fontes rediere suos: concussaque sisto,
Stantia concutio cantu freta; nubila pello,
Nubilaque induco: ventos abigoque vocoque.
Vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces;
Et silvas moveo, jubeoque tremiscere montes,
Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulchres.
Te quoque luna traho.
Can you doubt me then, daughter?
That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods walk;
Whole earth's foundations bellow, and the spirits
Of the entomb'd to burst out from their marbles;
Nay, draw yon moon to my involv'd designs?
Fire. I know as well as can be when my mother 's mad, and our great cat angry; for one spits French then, and th' other spits Latin.
Duch. I did not doubt you, mother.
Hec. No? what did you?
My power 's so firm, it is not to be question'd.
Duch. Forgive what 's past: and now I know th' offensiveness
That vexes art, I 'll shun th' occasion ever.
Hec. Leave all to me and my five sisters, daughter.
It shall be conveyed in at howlet-time.
Take you no care. My spirits know their moments;
Raven or scritch-owl never fly by th' door,
But they call in (I thank 'em), and they lose not by 't.
I give 'em barley soak'd in infants' blood:
They shall have *semina cum sanguine*,
Their gorge cramm'd full, if they come once to our house:

We are no niggard. [*Exit* Duchess.

Fire. They fare but too well when they come hither. They ate up as much t' other night as would have made me a good conscionable pudding.

Hec. Give me some lizard's brain: quickly, Firestone!
Where 's grannam Stadlin, and all the rest o' th' sisters?

Fire. All at hand, forsooth.

Hec. Give me marmaritin; some bear-breech. When?

Fire. Here 's bear-breech and lizard's brain, forsooth.

Hec. Into the vessel;
And fetch three ounces of the red-hair'd girl
I kill'd last midnight.

Fire. Whereabouts, sweet mother?

Hec. Hip; hip or flank. Where is the acopus?

Fire. You shall have acopus, forsooth.

Hec. Stir, stir about, whilst I begin the charm.

A CHARM SONG,

(*The Witches going about the Cauldron*).

Black spirits, and white; red spirits, and gray;
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may.
Titty, Tiffin, keep it stiff in;
Firedrake, Puckey, make it lucky;
Liard, Robin, you must bob in.
Round, around, around, about, about;
All ill come running in; all good keep out!

1st Witch. Here 's the blood of a bat.

Hec. Put in that; oh, put in that.

2d Witch. Here 's libbard's-bane.

Hec. Put in again.

1st Witch. The juice of toad; the oil of adder.

2d Witch. Those will make the yonker madder.

Hec. Put in: there 's all, and rid the stench.

Fire. Nay, here 's three ounces of the red-hair'd wench.

All. Round, around, around, &c.

Hec. See, see enough: into the vessel with it.
There; 't hath the true perfection. I 'm so light
At any mischief: there 's no villainy
But is in tune, methinks.

Fire. A tune! 'Tis to the tune of damnation then. I warrant you that song hath a villainous burthen.

Hec. Come, my sweet sisters; let the air strike our tune,
Whilst we show reverence to yond peeping moon.
[*The Witches dance, and then exeunt.*'

I will conclude this account with Mr. Lamb's observations on the distinctive characters of these extraordinary and formidable personages, as they are described by Middleton or Shakespear.

'Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in

Macbeth and the incantations in this play, which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakespear. His witches are distinguished from the witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman, plotting some dire mischief, might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul.—Hecate, in Middleton, has a son, a low buffoon: the Hags of Shakespear have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. —Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his Hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot consist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They "raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life."'

LECTURE III

ON MARSTON, CHAPMAN, DECKAR, AND WEBSTER

The writers of whom I have already treated, may be said to have been 'no mean men'; those of whom I have yet to speak, are certainly no whit inferior. Would that I could do them any thing like justice! It is not difficult to give at least their seeming due to great and well-known names; for the sentiments of the reader meet the descriptions of the critic more than half way, and clothe what is perhaps vague and extravagant praise with a substantial form and distinct meaning. But in attempting to extol the merits of an obscure work of genius, our words are either lost in empty air, or are 'blown stifling back' upon the mouth that utters them. The greater those merits are, and the truer the praise, the more suspicious and disproportionate does it almost necessarily appear; for it has no relation to any image previously existing in the public mind, and therefore looks

like an imposition fabricated out of nothing. In this case, the only way that I know of is, to make these old writers (as much as can be) vouchers for their own pretensions, which they are well able to make good. I shall in the present Lecture give some account of Marston and Chapman, and afterwards of Deckar and Webster.

Marston is a writer of great merit, who rose to tragedy from the ground of comedy, and whose *forte* was not sympathy, either with the stronger or softer emotions, but an impatient scorn and bitter indignation against the vices and follies of men, which vented itself either in comic irony or in lofty invective. He was properly a satirist. He was not a favourite with his contemporaries, nor they with him. He was first on terms of great intimacy, and afterwards at open war, with Ben Jonson; and he is most unfairly criticised in The Return from Parnassus, under the name of Monsieur Kinsayder, as a mere libeller and buffoon. Writers in their life-time do all they can to degrade and vilify one another, and expect posterity to have a very tender care of their reputations! The writers of this age, in general, cannot however be reproached with this infirmity. The number of plays that they wrote in conjunction, is a proof of the contrary; and a circumstance no less curious, as to the division of intellectual labour, than the cordial union of sentiment it implied. Unlike most poets, the love of their art surmounted their hatred of one another. Genius was not become a vile and vulgar pretence, and they respected in others what they knew to be true inspiration in themselves. They courted the applause of the multitude, but came to one another for judgment and assistance. When we see these writers working together on the same admirable productions, year after year, as was the case with Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton and Rowley, with Chapman, Deckar, and Jonson, it reminds one of Ariosto's eloquent apostrophe to the Spirit of Ancient Chivalry, when he has seated his rival knights, Renaldo and Ferraw, on the same horse.

> 'Oh ancient knights of true and noble heart,
> They rivals were, one faith they liv'd not under;
> Besides, they felt their bodies shrewdly smart
> Of blows late given, and yet (behold a wonder)
> Thro' thick and thin, suspicion set apart,
> Like friends they ride, and parted not asunder,
> Until the horse with double spurring drived
> Unto a way parted in two, arrived.'[1]

Marston's Antonio and Mellida is a tragedy of considerable force and pathos; but in the most critical parts, the author frequently breaks

[1] Sir John Harrington's translation.

off or flags without any apparent reason but want of interest in his subject; and farther, the best and most affecting situations and bursts of feeling are too evidently imitations of Shakespear. Thus the unexpected meeting between Andrugio and Lucio, in the beginning of the third act, is a direct counterpart of that between Lear and Kent, only much weakened: and the interview between Antonio and Mellida has a strong resemblance to the still more affecting one between Lear and Cordelia, and is most wantonly disfigured by the sudden introduction of half a page of Italian rhymes, which gives the whole an air of burlesque. The conversation of Lucio and Andrugio, again, after his defeat seems to invite, but will not bear a comparison with Richard the Second's remonstrance with his courtiers, who offered him consolation in his misfortunes; and no one can be at a loss to trace the allusion to Romeo's conduct on being apprized of his banishment, in the termination of the following speech.

> '*Antonio.* Each man takes hence life, but no man death:
> He 's a good fellow, and keeps open house:
> A thousand thousand ways lead to his gate,
> To his wide-mouthed porch: when niggard life
> Hath but one little, little wicket through.
> We wring ourselves into this wretched world
> To pule and weep, exclaim, to curse and rail,
> To fret and ban the fates, *to strike the earth*
> *As I do now.* Antonio, curse thy birth,
> And die.'

The following short passage might be quoted as one of exquisite beauty and originality—

> —'As having clasp'd a rose
> Within my palm, the rose being ta'en away,
> My hand retains a little breath of sweet;
> So may man's trunk, his spirit slipp'd away,
> Hold still a faint perfume of his sweet guest.'
>
> *Act IV. Scene* 1.

The character of Felice in this play is an admirable satirical accompaniment, and is the favourite character of this author (in all probability his own), that of a shrewd, contemplative cynic, and sarcastic spectator in the drama of human life. It runs through all his plays, is shared by Quadratus and Lampatho in WHAT YOU WILL (it is into the mouth of the last of these that he has put that fine invective against the uses of philosophy, in the account of himself and his spaniel, 'who still slept while he baus'd leaves, tossed o'er the dunces, por'd on the old print'), and is at its height in the Fawn and Malevole, in

his Parasitaster and Malcontent. These two comedies are his *chef d'œuvres*. The character of the Duke Hercules of Ferrara, disguised as the Parasite, in the first of these, is well sustained throughout, with great sense, dignity, and spirit. He is a wise censurer of men and things, and rails at the world with charitable bitterness. He may put in a claim to a sort of family likeness to the Duke, in Measure for Measure: only the latter descends from his elevation to watch in secret over serious crimes; the other is only a spy on private follies. There is something in this cast of character (at least in comedy—perhaps it neutralizes the tone and interest in tragedy), that finds a wonderful reciprocity in the breast of the reader or audience. It forms a kind of middle term or point of union between the busy actors in the scene and the indifferent byestander, insinuates the plot, and suggests a number of good wholesome reflections, for the sagacity and honesty of which we do not fail to take credit to ourselves. We are let into its confidence, and have a perfect reliance on its sincerity. Our sympathy with it is without any drawback; for it has no part to perform itself, and 'is nothing, if not critical.' It is a sure card to play. We may doubt the motives of heroic actions, or differ about the just limits and extreme workings of the passions; but the professed misanthrope is a character that no one need feel any scruples in trusting, since the dislike of folly and knavery in the abstract is common to knaves and fools with the wise and honest! Besides the instructive moral vein of Hercules as the Fawn or Parasitaster, which contains a world of excellent matter, most aptly and wittily delivered; there are two other characters perfectly hit off, Gonzago the old prince of Urbino, and Granuffo, one of his lords in waiting. The loquacious, good-humoured, undisguised vanity of the one is excellently relieved by the silent gravity of the other. The wit of this last character (Granuffo) consists in his not speaking a word through the whole play; he never contradicts what is said, and only assents by implication. He is a most infallible courtier, and follows the prince like his shadow, who thus graces his pretensions.

'We would be private, only Faunus stay; he is a wise fellow, daughter, a very wise fellow, for he is still just of my opinion; my Lord Granuffo, you may likewise stay, for I know you 'll say nothing.'

And again, a little farther on, he says—

'Faunus, this Granuffo is a right wise good lord, a man of excellent discourse, and never speaks; his signs to me and men of profound reach instruct abundantly; he begs suits with signs, gives thanks with signs, puts off his hat leisurely, maintains his beard learnedly, keeps his lust privately, makes a nodding leg courtly, and lives happily.'—'Silence,' replies Hercules,

'is an excellent modest grace; but especially before so instructing a wisdom as that of your Excellency.'

The garrulous self-complacency of this old lord is kept up in a vein of pleasant humour; an instance of which might be given in his owning of some learned man, that 'though he was no duke, yet he was wise;' and the manner in which the others play upon this foible, and make him contribute to his own discomfiture, without his having the least suspicion of the plot against him, is full of ingenuity and counterpoint. In the last scene he says, very characteristically,

'Of all creatures breathing, I do hate those things that struggle to seem wise, and yet are indeed very fools. I remember when I was a young man, in my father's days, there were four gallant spirits for resolution, as proper for body, as witty in discourse, as any were in Europe; nay, Europe had not such. I was one of them. We four did all love one lady; a most chaste virgin she was: we all enjoyed her, and so enjoyed her, that, despite the strictest guard was set upon her, we had her at our pleasure. I speak it for her honour, and my credit. Where shall you find such witty fellows now a-days? Alas! how easy is it in these weaker times to cross love-tricks! Ha! ha! ha! Alas, alas! I smile to think (I must confess with some glory to mine own wisdom), to think how I found out, and crossed, and curbed, and in the end made desperate Tiberio's love. Alas! good silly youth, that dared to cope with age and such a beard!

Hercules. But what yet might your well-known wisdom think,
If such a one, as being most severe,
A most protested opposite to the match
Of two young lovers; who having barr'd them speech,
All interviews, all messages, all means
To plot their wished ends; even he himself
Was by their cunning made the go-between,
The only messenger, the token-carrier;
Told them the times when they might fitly meet,
Nay, shew'd the way to one another's bed?'

To which Gonzago replies, in a strain of exulting dotage:

'May one have the sight of such a fellow for nothing? Doth there breathe such an egregious ass? Is there such a foolish animal in *rerum natura*? How is it possible such a simplicity can exist? Let us not lose our laughing at him, for God's sake; let folly's sceptre light upon him, and to the ship of fools with him instantly.

Dondolo. Of all these follies I arrest your grace.'

Molière has built a play on nearly the same foundation, which is not much superior to the present. Marston, among other topics of satire, has a fling at the pseudo-critics and philosophers of his time,

who were 'full of wise saws and modern instances.' Thus he freights his Ship of Fools:

'*Dondolo.* Yes, yes; but they got a supersedeas; all of them proved themselves either knaves or madmen, and so were let go: there 's none left now in our ship but a few citizens that let their wives keep their shop-books, some philosophers, and a few critics; one of which critics has lost his flesh with fishing at the measure of Plautus' verses; another has vowed to get the consumption of the lungs, or to leave to posterity the true orthography and pronunciation of laughing.

Hercules. But what philosophers ha' ye?

Dondolo. Oh very strange fellows; one knows nothing, dares not aver he lives, goes, sees, feels.

Nymphadoro. A most insensible philosopher.

Dondolo. Another, that there is no present time; and that one man to-day and to-morrow, is not the same man; so that he that yesterday owed money, to-day owes none; because he is not the same man.

Herod. Would that philosophy hold good in law?

Hercules. But why has the Duke thus laboured to have all the fools shipped out of his dominions?

Dondolo. Marry, because he would play the fool alone without any rival.'

Act IV.

Molière has enlarged upon the same topic in his *Mariage Forcé*, but not with more point or effect. Nymphadoro's reasons for devoting himself to the sex generally, and Hercules's description of the different qualifications of different men, will also be found to contain excellent specimens, both of style and matter.—The disguise of Hercules as the Fawn, is assumed voluntarily, and he is comparatively a calm and dispassionate observer of the times. Malevole's disguise in the Malcontent has been forced upon him by usurpation and injustice, and his invectives are accordingly more impassioned and virulent. His satire does not 'like a wild goose fly, unclaimed of any man,' but has a bitter and personal application. Take him in the words of the usurping Duke's account of him.

'This Malevole is one of the most prodigious affections that ever conversed with Nature; a man, or rather a monster, more discontent than Lucifer when he was thrust out of the presence. His appetite is unsatiable as the grave, as far from any content as from heaven. His highest delight is to procure others vexation, and therein he thinks he truly serves Heaven; for 'tis his position, whosoever in this earth can be contented, is a slave, and damned; therefore does he afflict all, in that to which they are most affected. The elements struggle with him; his own soul is at variance with herself; his speech is halter-worthy at all hours. I like him, faith; he gives good intelligence to my spirit, makes me understand those weaknesses which others' flattery palliates.

Hark! they sing.

Enter Malevole, *after the Song.*

Pietro Jacomo. See he comes! Now shall you hear the extremity of a Malcontent; he is as free as air; he blows over every man. And—Sir, whence come you now?

Malevole. From the public place of much dissimulation, the church.

Pietro Jacomo. What didst there?

Malevole. Talk with a usurer; take up at interest.

Pietro Jacomo. I wonder what religion thou art of?

Malevole. Of a soldier's religion.

Pietro Jacomo. And what dost think makes most infidels now?

Malevole. Sects, sects. I am weary: would I were one of the Duke's hounds.

Pietro Jacomo. But what's the common news abroad? Thou dogg'st rumour still.

Malevole. Common news? Why, common words are, God save ye, fare ye well: common actions, flattery and cozenage: common things, women and cuckolds.' *Act I. Scene* 3.

In reading all this, one is somehow reminded perpetually of Mr. Kean's acting: in Shakespear we do not often think of him, except in those parts which he constantly acts, and in those one cannot forget him. I might observe on the above passage, in excuse for some bluntnesses of style, that the ideal barrier between names and things seems to have been greater then than now. Words have become instruments of more importance than formerly. To mention certain actions, is almost to participate in them, as if consciousness were the same as guilt. The standard of delicacy varies at different periods, as it does in different countries, and is not a general test of superiority. The French, who pique themselves (and justly, in some particulars) on their quickness of tact and refinement of breeding, say and do things which we, a plainer and coarser people, could not think of without a blush. What would seem gross allusions to us at present, were without offence to our ancestors, and many things passed for jests with them, or matters of indifference, which would not now be endured. Refinement of language, however, does not keep pace with simplicity of manners. The severity of criticism exercised in our theatres towards some unfortunate straggling phrases in the old comedies, is but an ambiguous compliment to the immaculate purity of modern times. Marston's style was by no means more guarded than that of his contemporaries. He was also much more of a free-thinker than Marlowe, and there is a frequent, and not unfavourable allusion in his works, to later sceptical opinions.—In the play of the Malcontent we meet with an occasional mixture of comic gaiety, to relieve the more serious and painful business of the scene, as in the easy loquacious effrontery of the old *intriguante* Maquerella, and in

the ludicrous facility with which the idle courtiers avoid or seek the notice of Malevole, as he is in or out of favour; but the general tone and import of the piece is severe and moral. The plot is somewhat too intricate and too often changed (like the shifting of a scene), so as to break and fritter away the interest at the end; but the part of Aurelia, the Duchess of Pietro Jacomo, a dissolute and proud-spirited woman, is the highest strain of Marston's pen. The scene in particular, in which she receives and exults in the supposed news of her husband's death, is nearly unequalled in boldness of conception and in the unrestrained force of passion, taking away not only the consciousness of guilt, but overcoming the sense of shame.[1]

Next to Marston, I must put Chapman, whose name is better known as the translator of Homer than as a dramatic writer. He is, like Marston, a philosophic observer, a didactic reasoner: but he has both more gravity in his tragic style, and more levity in his comic vein. His Bussy d'Ambois, though not without interest or some fancy, is rather a collection of apophthegms or pointed sayings in the form of a dialogue, than a poem or a tragedy. In his verses the oracles have not ceased. Every other line is an axiom in morals—a libel on mankind, if truth is a libel. He is too stately for a wit, in his serious writings—too formal for a poet. Bussy d'Ambois is founded on a French plot and French manners. The character, from which it derives its name, is arrogant and ostentatious to an unheard-of degree, but full of nobleness and lofty spirit. His pride and unmeasured pretensions alone take away from his real merit; and by the quarrels and intrigues in which they involve him, bring about the catastrophe, which has considerable grandeur and imposing effect, in the manner of Seneca. Our author aims at the highest things in poetry, and tries in vain, wanting imagination and passion, to fill up the epic moulds of tragedy with sense and reason alone, so that he often runs into bombast and turgidity—is extravagant and pedantic at one and the same time. From the nature of the plot, which turns upon a love intrigue, much of the philosophy of this piece relates to the character of the sex. Milton says,

'The way of women's will is hard to hit.'

But old Chapman professes to have found the clue to it, and winds his uncouth way through all the labyrinth of love. Its deepest recesses 'hide nothing from his view.' The close intrigues of court policy, the subtle workings of the human soul, move before him like a sea dark, deep, and glittering with wrinkles for the smile of beauty.

[1] See the conclusion of Lecture IV.

Fulke Greville alone could go beyond him in gravity and mystery. The plays of the latter (Mustapha and Alaham) are abstruse as the mysteries of old, and his style inexplicable as the riddles of the Sphinx. As an instance of his love for the obscure, the marvellous, and impossible, he calls up 'the ghost of one of the old kings of Ormus,' as prologue to one of his tragedies; a very reverend and inscrutable personage, who, we may be sure, blabs no living secrets. Chapman, in his other pieces, where he lays aside the gravity of the philosopher and poet, discovers an unexpected comic vein, distinguished by equal truth of nature and lively good humour. I cannot say that this character pervades any one of his entire comedies; but the introductory sketch of Monsieur D'Olive is the undoubted prototype of that light, flippant, gay, and infinitely delightful class of character, of the professed men of wit and pleasure about town, which we have in such perfection in Wycherley and Congreve, such as Sparkish, Witwoud and Petulant, &c. both in the sentiments and in the style of writing. For example, take the last scene of the first act.

'*Enter* D'Olive.

Rhoderique. What, Monsieur D'Olive, the only admirer of wit and good words.

D'Olive. Morrow, wits: morrow, good wits: my little parcels of wit, I have rods in pickle for you. How dost, Jack; may I call thee, sir, Jack yet?

Mugeron. You may, sir; sir 's as commendable an addition as Jack, for ought I know.

D'Ol. I know it, Jack, and as common too.

Rhod. Go to, you may cover; we have taken notice of your embroidered beaver.

D'Ol. Look you: by heaven thou 'rt one of the maddest bitter slaves in Europe: I do but wonder how I made shift to love thee all this while.

Rhod. Go to, what might such a parcel-gilt cover be worth?

Mug. Perhaps more than the whole piece beside.

D'Ol. Good i' faith, but bitter. Oh, you mad slaves, I think you had Satyrs to your sires, yet I must love you, I must take pleasure in you, and i' faith tell me, how is 't? live I see you do, but how? but how, wits?

Rhod. Faith, as you see, like poor younger brothers.

D'Ol. By your wits?

Mug. Nay, not turned poets neither.

D'Ol. Good in sooth! but indeed to say truth, time was when the sons of the Muses had the privilege to live only by their wits, but times are altered, Monopolies are now called in, and wit 's become a free trade for all sorts to live by: lawyers live by wit, and they live worshipfully: soldiers live by wit, and they live honourably: panders live by wit, and they live honestly: in a word, there are but few trades but live by wit, only bawds and midwives live by women's labours, as fools and fiddlers do by making

mirth, pages and parasites by making legs, painters and players by making mouths and faces: ha, does 't well, wits?

Rhod. Faith, thou followest a figure in thy jests, as country gentlemen follow fashions, when they be worn threadbare.

D'Ol. Well, well, let 's leave these wit skirmishes, and say when shall we meet?

Mug. How think you, are we not met now?

D'Ol. Tush, man! I mean at my chamber, where we may take free use of ourselves; that is, drink sack, and talk satire, and let our wits run the wild-goose chase over court and country. I will have my chamber the rendezvous of all good wits, the shop of good words, the mint of good jests, an ordinary of fine discourse; critics, essayists, linguists, poets, and other professors of that faculty of wit, shall, at certain hours i' th' day, resort thither; it shall be a second Sorbonne, where all doubts or differences of learning, honour, duellism, criticism, and poetry, shall be disputed: and how, wits, do ye follow the court still?

Rhod. Close at heels, sir; and I can tell you, you have much to answer to your stars, that you do not so too.

D'Ol. As why, wits? as why?

Rhod. Why, sir, the court 's as 'twere the stage: and they that have a good suit of parts and qualities, ought to press thither to grace them, and receive their due merit.

D'Ol. Tush, let the court follow me: he that soars too near the sun, melts his wings many times; as I am, I possess myself, I enjoy my liberty, my learning, my wit: as for wealth and honour, let 'em go; I 'll not lose my learning to be a lord, nor my wit to be an alderman.

Mug. Admirable D'Olive!

D'Ol. And what! you stand gazing at this comet here, and admire it, I dare say.

Rhod. And do not you?

D'Ol. Not I, I admire nothing but wit.

Rhod. But I wonder how she entertains time in that solitary cell: does she not take tobacco, think you?

D'Ol. She does, she does: others make it their physic, she makes it her food: her sister and she take it by turn, first one, then the other, and Vandome ministers to them both.

Mug. How sayest thou by that Helen of Greece the Countess's sister? there were a paragon, Monsieur D'Olive, to admire and marry too.

D'Ol. Not for me.

Rhod. No? what exceptions lie against the choice?

D'Ol. Tush, tell me not of choice; if I stood affected that way, I would choose my wife as men do Valentines, blindfold, or draw cuts for them, for so I shall be sure not to be deceived in choosing; for take this of me, there 's ten times more deceit in women than in horse-flesh; and I say still, that a pretty well-pac'd chamber-maid is the only fashion; if she grows full or fulsome, give her but sixpence to buy her a hand-basket, and send her the way of all flesh, there 's no more but so.

Mug. Indeed that 's the savingest way.

D'Ol. O me! what a hell 'tis for a man to be tied to the continual

charge of a coach, with the appurtenances, horses, men, and so forth: and then to have a man's house pestered with a whole country of guests, grooms, panders, waiting-maids, &c. I careful to please my wife, she careless to displease me; shrewish if she be honest; intolerable if she be wise; imperious as an empress; all she does must be law, all she says gospel: oh, what a penance 'tis to endure her! I glad to forbear still, all to keep her loyal, and yet perhaps when all 's done, my heir shall be like my horse-keeper: fie on 't! the very thought of marriage were able to cool the hottest liver in France.

Rhod. Well, I durst venture twice the price of your gilt coney's wool, we shall have you change your copy ere a twelvemonth's day.

Mug. We must have you dubb'd o' th' order; there 's no remedy: you that have, unmarried, done such honourable service in the commonwealth, must needs receive the honour due to 't in marriage.

Rhod. That he may do, and never marry.

D'Ol. As how, wits? i' faith as how?

Rhod. For if he can prove his father was free o' th' order, and that he was his father's son, then, by the laudable custom of the city, he may be a cuckold by his father's copy, and never serve for 't.

D'Ol. Ever good i' faith!

Mug. Nay how can he plead that, when 'tis as well known his father died a bachelor?

D'Ol. Bitter, in verity, bitter! But good still in its kind.

Rhod. Go to, we must have you follow the lantern of your forefathers.

Mug. His forefathers? S'body, had he more fathers than one?

D'Ol. Why, this is right: here 's wit canvast out on 's coat, into 's jacket: the string sounds ever well, that rubs not too much o' th' frets: I must love your wits, I must take pleasure in you. Farewell, good wits: you know my lodging, make an errand thither now and then, and save your ordinary; do, wits, do.

Mug. We shall be troublesome t' ye.

D'Ol. O God, sir, you wrong me, to think I can be troubled with wit: I love a good wit as I love myself: if you need a brace or two of crowns at any time, address but your sonnet, it shall be as sufficient as your bond at all times: I carry half a score birds in a cage, shall ever remain at your call. Farewell, wits; farewell, good wits. [*Exit.*

Rhod. Farewell the true map of a gull: by heaven he shall to th' court! 'tis the perfect model of an impudent upstart; the compound of a poet and a lawyer; he shall sure to th' court.

Mug. Nay, for God's sake, let 's have no fools at court.

Rhod. He shall to 't, that 's certain. The Duke had a purpose to dispatch some one or other to the French king, to entreat him to send for the body of his niece, which the melancholy Earl of St. Anne, her husband, hath kept so long unburied, as meaning one grave should entomb himself and her together.

Mug. A very worthy subject for an embassage, as D'Olive is for an embassador agent; and 'tis as suitable to his brain, as his parcel-gilt beaver to his fool's head.

Rhod. Well, it shall go hard, but he shall be employed. Oh, 'tis a most

accomplished ass; the mongrel of a gull, and a villain: the very essence of his soul is pure villainy; the substance of his brain, foolery: one that believes nothing from the stars upward; a pagan in belief, an epicure beyond belief; prodigious in lust; prodigal in wasteful expense; in necessary, most penurious. His wit is to admire and imitate; his grace is to censure and detract; he shall to th' court, i'faith he shall thither: I will shape such employment for him, as that he himself shall have no less contentment, in making mirth to the whole court, than the Duke and the whole court shall have pleasure in enjoying his presence. A knave, if he be rich, is fit to make an officer, as a fool, if he be a knave, is fit to make an intelligencer. [*Exeunt.*'

His May-Day is not so good. All Fools, The Widow's Tears, and Eastward Hoe, are comedies of great merit, (particularly the last). The first is borrowed a good deal from Terence, and the character of Valerio, an accomplished rake, who passes with his father for a person of the greatest economy and rusticity of manners, is an excellent idea, executed with spirit. Eastward Hoe was written in conjunction with Ben Jonson and Marston; and for his share in it, on account of some allusions to the Scotch, just after the accession of James I. our author, with his friends, had nearly lost his ears. Such were the notions of poetical justice in those days! The behaviour of Ben Jonson's mother on this occasion is remarkable. 'On his release from prison, he gave an entertainment to his friends, among whom were Camden and Selden. In the midst of the entertainment, his mother, more an antique Roman than a Briton, drank to him, and shewed him a paper of poison, which she intended to have given him in his liquor, having first taken a portion of it herself, if the sentence for his punishment had been executed.' This play contains the first idea of Hogarth's Idle and Industrious Apprentices.

It remains for me to say something of Webster and Deckar. For these two writers I do not know how to shew my regard and admiration sufficiently. Noble-minded Webster, gentle-hearted Deckar, how may I hope to 'express ye unblam'd,' and repay to your neglected *manes* some part of the debt of gratitude I owe for proud and soothing recollections? I pass by the Appius and Virginia of the former, which is however a good, sensible, solid tragedy, cast in a frame-work of the most approved models, with little to blame or praise in it, except the affecting speech of Appius to Virginia just before he kills her; as well as Deckar's Wonder of a Kingdom, his Jacomo Gentili, that truly ideal character of a magnificent patron, and Old Fortunatus and his Wishing-cap, which last has the idle garrulity of age, with the freshness and gaiety of youth still upon its cheek and in its heart. These go into the common catalogue, and are lost in the

crowd; but Webster's Vittoria Corombona I cannot so soon part with; and old honest Deckar's Signior Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with this last-mentioned worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life. We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value, if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within 'the red-leaved tables of our hearts.' The pregnant materials are there; 'the pangs, the internal pangs are ready; and poor humanity's afflicted will struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.' But the reading of fine poetry may indeed open the bleeding wounds, or pour balm and consolation into them, or sometimes even close them up for ever! Let any one who has never known cruel disappointment, nor comfortable hopes, read the first scene between Orlando and Hippolito, in Deckar's play of the Honest Whore, and he will see nothing in it. But I think few persons will be entirely proof against such passages as some of the following.

'*Enter* Orlando Friscobaldo.

Omnes. Signior Friscobaldo.

Hipolito. Friscobaldo, oh! pray call him, and leave me; we two have business.

Carolo. Ho, Signior! Signior Friscobaldo, the Lord Hipolito. [*Exeunt.*

Orlando. My noble Lord! the Lord Hipolito! The Duke's son! his brave daughter's brave husband! How does your honour'd Lordship? Does your nobility remember so poor a gentleman as Signior Orlando Friscobaldo? old mad Orlando?

Hip. Oh, Sir, our friends! they ought to be unto us as our jewels; as dearly valued, being locked up and unseen, as when we wear them in our hands. I see, Friscobaldo, age hath not command of your blood; for all time's sickle hath gone over you, you are Orlando still.

Orl. Why, my Lord, are not the fields mown and cut down, and stript bare, and yet wear they not pied coats again? Though my head be like a leek, white, may not my heart be like the blade, green?

Hip. Scarce can I read the stories on your brow,
Which age hath writ there: you look youthful still.

Orl. I eat snakes, my Lord, I eat snakes. My heart shall never have a wrinkle in it, so long as I can cry Hem! with a clear voice. * *

Hip. You are the happier man, Sir.

Orl. May not old Friscobaldo, my Lord, be merry now, ha? I have a little, have all things, have nothing: I have no wife, I have no child, have no chick, and why should I not be in my jocundare?

Hip. Is your wife then departed?

Orl. She 's an old dweller in those high countries, yet not from me: here, she 's here; a good couple are seldom parted.

Hip. You had a daughter, too, Sir, had you not?

Orl. Oh, my Lord! this old tree had one branch, and but one branch, growing out of it: it was young, it was fair, it was strait: I pruned it daily, drest it carefully, kept it from the wind, help'd it to the sun; yet for all my skill in planting, it grew crooked, it bore crabs: I hew'd it down. What 's become of it, I neither know nor care.

Hip. Then can I tell you what 's become of it: that branch is wither'd.

Orl. So 'twas long ago.

Hip. Her name, I think, was Bellafront; she 's dead.

Orl. Ha! dead?

Hip. Yes, what of her was left, not worth the keeping,
Even in my sight, was thrown into a grave.

Orl. Dead! my last and best peace go with her! I see death 's a good trencherman; he can eat coarse homely meat as well as the daintiest—— Is she dead?

Hip. She 's turn'd to earth.

Orl. Would she were turned to Heaven. Umph! Is she dead? I am glad the world has lost one of his idols: no whoremonger will at midnight beat at the doors: in her grave sleep all my shame and her own; and all my sorrows, and all her sins.

Hip. I 'm glad you are wax, not marble; you are made
Of man 's best temper; there are now good hopes
That all these heaps of ice about your heart,
By which a father 's love was frozen up,
Are thaw'd in those sweet show'rs fetch'd from your eye:
We are ne'er like angels till our passions die.
She is not dead, but lives under worse fate;
I think she 's poor; and more to clip her wings,
Her husband at this hour lies in the jail,
For killing of a man: to save his blood,
Join all your force with mine; mine shall be shown,
The getting of his life preserves your own.

Orl. In my daughter you will say! Does she live then? I am sorry I wasted tears upon a harlot! but the best is, I have a handkerchief to drink them up, soap can wash them all out again. Is she poor?

Hip. Trust me, I think she is.

Orl. Then she 's a right strumpet. I never knew one of their trade rich two years together; sieves can hold no water, nor harlots hoard up money: taverns, tailors, bawds, panders, fiddlers, swaggerers, fools, and knaves, do all wait upon a common harlot 's trencher; she is the gallypot to which these drones fly: not for love to the pot, but for the sweet sucket in it, her money, her money.

Hip. I almost dare pawn my word, her bosom gives warmth to no such snakes; when did you see her?

Orl. Not seventeen summers.

Hip. Is your hate so old?

Orl. Older; it has a white head, and shall never die 'till she be buried: her wrongs shall be my bed-fellow.

Hip. Work yet his life, since in it lives her fame.

Orl. No, let him hang, and half her infamy departs out of the world; I hate him for her: he taught her first to taste poison; I hate her for herself, because she refused my physic.

Hip. Nay, but Friscobaldo.

Orl. I detest her, I defy both, she 's not mine, she 's—

Hip. Hear her but speak.

Orl. I love no mermaids, I 'll not be caught with a quail-pipe.

Hip. You 're now beyond all reason. Is 't dotage to relieve your child, being poor?

Orl. 'Tis foolery; relieve her? Were her cold limbs stretcht out upon a bier, I would not sell this dirt under my nails, to buy her an hour's breath, nor give this hair, unless it were to choak her.

Hip. Fare you well, for I 'll trouble you no more. [*Exit.*

Orl. And fare you well, Sir, go thy ways; we have few lords of thy making, that love wenches for their honesty.—'Las, my girl, art thou poor? Poverty dwells next door to despair, there 's but a wall between them: despair is one of hell's catchpoles, and lest that devil arrest her, I 'll to her; yet she shall not know me: she shall drink of my wealth as beggars do of running water, freely; yet never know from what fountain's head it flows. Shall a silly bird pick her own breast to nourish her young ones: and can a father see his child starve? That were hard: the pelican does it, and shall not I?'

The rest of the character is answerable to the beginning. The execution is, throughout, as exact as the conception is new and masterly. There is the least colour possible used; the pencil drags; the canvas is almost seen through: but then, what precision of outline, what truth and purity of tone, what firmness of hand, what marking of character! The words and answers all along are so true and pertinent, that we seem to see the gestures, and to hear the tone with which they are accompanied. So when Orlando, disguised, says to his daughter, 'You 'll forgive me,' and she replies, 'I am not marble, I forgive you;' or again, when she introduces him to her husband, saying simply, 'It is my father,' there needs no stage-direction to supply the relenting tones of voice or cordial frankness of manner with which these words are spoken. It is as if there were some fine art to chisel thought, and to embody the inmost movements of the mind in every-day actions and familiar speech. It has been asked,

> 'Oh! who can paint a sun-beam to the blind,
> Or make him feel a shadow with his mind?'

But this difficulty is here in a manner overcome. Simplicity and extravagance of style, homeliness and quaintness, tragedy and comedy,

interchangeably set their hands and seals to this admirable production. We find the simplicity of prose with the graces of poetry. The stalk grows out of the ground; but the flowers spread their flaunting leaves in the air. The mixture of levity in the chief character bespeaks the bitterness from which it seeks relief; it is the idle echo of fixed despair, jealous of observation or pity. The sarcasm quivers on the lip, while the tear stands congealed on the eye-lid. This 'tough senior,' this impracticable old gentleman softens into a little child; this choke-pear melts in the mouth like marmalade. In spite of his resolute professions of misanthropy, he watches over his daughter with kindly solicitude; plays the careful housewife; broods over her lifeless hopes; nurses the decay of her husband's fortune, as he had supported her tottering infancy; saves the high-flying Matheo from the gallows more than once, and is twice a father to them. The story has all the romance of private life, all the pathos of bearing up against silent grief, all the tenderness of concealed affection:—there is much sorrow patiently borne, and then comes peace. Bellafront, in the two parts of this play taken together, is a most interesting character. It is an extreme, and I am afraid almost an ideal case. She gives the play its title, turns out a true penitent, that is, a practical one, and is the model of an exemplary wife. She seems intended to establish the converse of the position, that *a reformed rake makes the best husband*, the only difficulty in proving which, is, I suppose, to meet with the character. The change of her relative position, with regard to Hippolito, who, in the first part, in the sanguine enthusiasm of youthful generosity, has reclaimed her from vice, and in the second part, his own faith and love of virtue having been impaired with the progress of years, tries in vain to lure her back again to her former follies, has an effect the most striking and beautiful. The pleadings on both sides, for and against female faith and constancy, are managed with great polemical skill, assisted by the grace and vividness of poetical illustration. As an instance of the manner in which Bellafront speaks of the miseries of her former situation, 'and she has felt them knowingly,' I might give the lines in which she contrasts the different regard shewn to the modest or the abandoned of her sex.

> 'I cannot, seeing she 's woven of such bad stuff,
> Set colours on a harlot bad enough.
> Nothing did make me when I lov'd them best,
> To loath them more than this: when in the street
> A fair, young, modest damsel, I did meet;
> She seem'd to all a dove, when I pass'd by,
> And I to all a raven: every eye
> That followed her, went with a bashful glance;

> At me each bold and jeering countenance
> Darted forth scorn: to her, as if she had been
> Some tower unvanquished, would they all vail;
> 'Gainst me swoln rumour hoisted every sail.
> She crown'd with reverend praises, pass'd by them;
> I, though with face mask'd, could not 'scape the hem;
> For, as if heav'n had set strange marks on whores,
> Because they should be pointing-stocks to man,
> Drest up in civilest shape, a courtesan,
> Let her walk saint-like, noteless, and unknown,
> Yet she 's betray'd by some trick of her own.'

Perhaps this sort of appeal to matter of fact and popular opinion, is more convincing than the scholastic subtleties of the Lady in Comus. The manner too, in which Infelice, the wife of Hippolito, is made acquainted with her husband's infidelity, is finely dramatic; and in the scene where she convicts him of his injustice by taxing herself with incontinence first, and then turning his most galling reproaches to her into upbraidings against his own conduct, she acquits herself with infinite spirit and address. The contrivance, by which, in the first part, after being supposed dead, she is restored to life, and married to Hippolito, though perhaps a little far-fetched, is affecting and romantic. There is uncommon beauty in the Duke her father's description of her sudden illness. In reply to Infelice's declaration on reviving, 'I 'm well,' he says,

> 'Thou wert not so e'en now. Sickness' pale hand
> Laid hold on thee, ev'n in the deadst of feasting:
> And when a cup, crown'd with thy lover's health,
> Had touch'd thy lips, a sensible cold dew
> Stood on thy cheeks, as if that death had wept
> To see such beauty altered.'

Candido, the good-natured man of this play, is a character of inconceivable quaintness and simplicity. His patience and good-humour cannot be disturbed by any thing. The idea (for it is nothing but an idea) is a droll one, and is well supported. He is not only resigned to injuries, but 'turns them,' as Falstaff says of diseases, 'into commodities.' He is a patient Grizzel out of petticoats, or a Petruchio reversed. He is as determined upon winking at affronts, and keeping out of scrapes at all events, as the hero of the Taming of a Shrew is bent upon picking quarrels out of straws, and signalizing his manhood without the smallest provocation to do so. The sudden turn of the character of Candido, on his second marriage, is, however, as amusing as it is unexpected.

Matheo, 'the high-flying' husband of Bellafront, is a masterly

portrait, done with equal ease and effect. He is a person almost without virtue or vice, that is, he is in strictness without any moral principle at all. He has no malice against others, and no concern for himself. He is gay, profligate, and unfeeling, governed entirely by the impulse of the moment, and utterly reckless of consequences. His exclamation, when he gets a new suit of velvet, or a lucky run on the dice, 'do we not fly high,' is an answer to all arguments. Punishment or advice has no more effect upon him, than upon the moth that flies into the candle. He is only to be left to his fate. Orlando saves him from it, as we do the moth, by snatching it out of the flame, throwing it out of the window, and shutting down the casement upon it!

Webster would, I think, be a greater dramatic genius than Deckar, if he had the same originality; and perhaps is so, even without it. His White Devil and Duchess of Malfy, upon the whole perhaps, come the nearest to Shakespear of any thing we have upon record; the only drawback to them, the only shade of imputation that can be thrown upon them, 'by which they lose some colour,' is, that they are too like Shakespear, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression. So far, there is nobody else whom it would be either so difficult or so desirable to imitate; but it would have been still better, if all his characters had been entirely his own, had stood out as much from others, resting only on their own naked merits, as that of the honest Hidalgo, on whose praises I have dwelt so much above. Deckar has, I think, more truth of character, more instinctive depth of sentiment, more of the unconscious simplicity of nature; but he does not, out of his own stores, clothe his subject with the same richness of imagination, or the same glowing colours of language. Deckar excels in giving expression to certain habitual, deeply-rooted feelings, which remain pretty much the same in all circumstances, the simple uncompounded elements of nature and passion:—Webster gives more scope to their various combinations and changeable aspects, brings them into dramatic play by contrast and comparison, flings them into a state of fusion by a kindled fancy, makes them describe a wider arc of oscillation from the impulse of unbridled passion, and carries both terror and pity to a more painful and sometimes unwarrantable excess. Deckar is contented with the historic picture of suffering; Webster goes on to suggest horrible imaginings. The pathos of the one tells home and for itself; the other adorns his sentiments with some image of tender or awful beauty. In a word, Deckar is more like Chaucer or Boccaccio; as Webster's mind appears to have been cast more in the mould of Shakespear's, as well naturally as from studious emulation.

The Bellafront and Vittoria Corombona of these two excellent writers, shew their different powers and turn of mind. The one is all softness; the other 'all fire and air.' The faithful wife of Matheo sits at home drooping, 'like the female dove, the whilst her golden couplets are disclosed'; while the insulted and persecuted Vittoria darts killing scorn and pernicious beauty at her enemies. This White Devil (as she is called) is made fair as the leprosy, dazzling as the lightning. She is dressed like a bride in her wrongs and her revenge. In the trial-scene in particular, her sudden indignant answers to the questions that are asked her, startle the hearers. Nothing can be imagined finer than the whole conduct and conception of this scene, than her scorn of her accusers and of herself. The sincerity of her sense of guilt triumphs over the hypocrisy of their affected and official contempt for it. In answer to the charge of having received letters from the Duke of Brachiano, she says,

> 'Grant I was tempted:
> Condemn you me, for that the Duke did love me?
> So may you blame some fair and chrystal river,
> For that some melancholic distracted man
> Hath drown'd himself in 't.'

And again, when charged with being accessary to her husband's death, and shewing no concern for it—

> 'She comes not like a widow; she comes arm'd
> With scorn and impudence. Is this a mourning habit?'

she coolly replies,

> 'Had I foreknown his death as you suggest,
> I would have bespoke my mourning.'

In the closing scene with her cold-blooded assassins, Lodovico and Gasparo, she speaks daggers, and might almost be supposed to exorcise the murdering fiend out of these true devils. Every word probes to the quick. The whole scene is the sublime of contempt and indifference.

> '*Vittoria.* If Florence be i' th' Court, he would not kill me.
> *Gasparo.* Fool! princes give rewards with their own hands,
> But death or punishment by the hands of others.
> *Lodovico* (*To* Flamineo). Sirra, you once did strike me;
> I 'll strike you
> Unto the centre.
> *Flam.* Thou 'lt do it like a hangman, a base hangman,
> Not like a noble fellow; for thou see'st

I cannot strike again.
Lod. Dost laugh?
Flam. Would'st have me die, as I was born, in whining?
Gasp. Recommend yourself to Heaven.
Flam. No, I will carry mine own commendations thither.
Lod. Oh! could I kill you forty times a-day,
And use 't four years together, 'twere too little:
Nought grieves, but that you are too few to feed
The famine of our vengeance. What do'st think on?
Flam. Nothing; of nothing: leave thy idle questions—
I am i' th' way to study a long silence.
To prate were idle: I remember nothing;
There 's nothing of so infinite vexation
As man's own thoughts.
Lod. O thou glorious strumpet!
Could I divide thy breath from this pure air
When 't leaves thy body, I would suck it up,
And breathe 't upon some dunghill.
Vit. Cor. You my death's-man!
Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough;
Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman:
If thou be, do thy office in right form;
Fall down upon thy knees, and ask forgiveness.
Lod. O! thou hast been a most prodigious comet;
But I 'll cut off your train: kill the Moor first.
Vit. Cor. You shall not kill her first; behold my breast;
I will be waited on in death: my servant
Shall never go before me.
Gasp. Are you so brave?
Vit. Cor. Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great embassadours;
I 'll meet thy weapon half way.
Lod. Thou dost not tremble!
Methinks, fear should dissolve thee into air.
Vit. Cor. O, thou art deceiv'd, I am too true a woman!
Conceit can never kill me. I 'll tell thee what,
I will not in my death shed one base tear;
Or if look pale, for want of blood, not fear.
Gasp. (*To* Zanche). Thou art my task, black fury.
Zanche. I have blood
As red as either of theirs! Wilt drink some?
'Tis good for the falling-sickness: I am proud
Death cannot alter my complexion,
For I shall ne'er look pale.
Lod. Strike, strike,
With a joint motion.
Vit. Cor. 'Twas a manly blow:
The next thou giv'st, murther some sucking infant,
And then thou wilt be famous.'

Such are some of the *terrible graces* of the obscure, forgotten Webster. There are other parts of this play of a less violent, more subdued, and, if it were possible, even deeper character; such is the declaration of divorce pronounced by Brachiano on his wife:

> 'Your hand I'll kiss:
> This is the latest ceremony of my love;
> I'll never more live with you,' &c.

which is in the manner of, and equal to, Deckar's finest things:—and others, in a quite different style of fanciful poetry and bewildered passion; such as the lamentation of Cornelia, his mother, for the death of Marcello, and the parting scene of Brachiano; which would be as fine as Shakespear, if they were not in a great measure borrowed from his inexhaustible store. In the former, after Flamineo has stabbed his brother, and Hortensio comes in, Cornelia exclaims,

'Alas! he is not dead; he 's in a trance.
Why, here 's nobody shall get any thing by his death:
Let me call him again, for God's sake.

Hor. I would you were deceiv'd.

Corn. O you abuse me, you abuse me, you abuse me! How many have gone away thus, for want of 'tendance? Rear up 's head, rear up 's head; his bleeding inward will kill him.

Hor. You see he is departed.

Corn. Let me come to him; give me him as he is. If he be turn'd to earth, let me but give him one hearty kiss, and you shall put us both into one coffin. Fetch a looking-glass: see if his breath will not stain it; or pull out some feathers from my pillow, and lay them to his lips. Will you lose him for a little pains-taking?

Hor. Your kindest office is to pray for him.

Corn. Alas! I would not pray for him yet. He may live to lay me i' th' ground, and pray for me, if you 'll let me come to him.

Enter Brachiano, *all armed, save the Bearer, with* Flamineo *and Page.*

Brach. Was this your handy-work?

Flam. It was my misfortune.

Corn. He lies, he lies; he did not kill him. These have killed him, that would not let him be better looked to.

Brach. Have comfort, my griev'd mother.

Corn. O, you screech-owl!

Hor. Forbear, good madam.

Corn. Let me go, let me go.

(*She runs to* Flamineo *with her knife drawn, and coming to him, lets it fall*).

The God of Heav'n forgive thee! Dost not wonder
I pray for thee? I'll tell thee what 's the reason:

I have scarce breath to number twenty minutes;
I 'd not spend that in cursing. Fare thee well!
Half of thyself lies there; and may'st thou live
To fill an hour-glass with his moulder'd ashes,
To tell how thou should'st spend the time to come
In blest repentance.
Brach. Mother, pray tell me,
How came he by his death? What was the quarrel?
Corn. Indeed, my younger boy presum'd too much
Upon his manhood, gave him bitter words,
Drew his sword first; and so, I know not how,
For I was out of my wits, he fell with 's head
Just in my bosom.
Page. This is not true, madam.
Corn. I pr'ythee, peace.
One arrow 's graz'd already: it were vain
To lose this; for that will ne'er be found again.'

This is a good deal borrowed from Lear; but the inmost folds of the human heart, the sudden turns and windings of the fondest affection, are also laid open with so masterly and original a hand, that it seems to prove the occasional imitations as unnecessary as they are evident. The scene where the Duke discovers that he is poisoned, is as follows, and equally fine.

'*Brach.* Oh! I am gone already. The infection
Flies to the brain and heart. O, thou strong heart,
There 's such a covenant 'tween the world and thee,
They 're loth to part.
Giovanni. O my most lov'd father!
Brach. Remove the boy away:
Where 's this good woman? Had I infinite worlds,
They were too little for thee. Must I leave thee?
(*To* Vittoria).
What say you, screech-owls. (*To the Physicians*) Is the venom mortal?
Phy. Most deadly.
Brach. Most corrupted politic hangman!
You kill without book; but your art to save
Fails you as oft as great men's needy friends:
I that have given life to offending slaves,
And wretched murderers, have I not power
To lengthen mine own a twelve-month?
Do not kiss me, for I shall poison thee.
This unction is sent from the great Duke of Florence.
Francesco de Medici (*in disguise*). Sir, be of comfort.
Brach. Oh thou soft natural death! that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber!—no rough-bearded comet
Stares on thy mild departure: the dull owl
Beats not against thy casement: the hoarse wolf

Scents not thy carrion. Pity winds thy corse,
Whilst horror waits on princes.
Vit. Cor. I am lost for ever.
Brach. How miserable a thing it is to die
'Mongst women howling! What are those?
Flam. Franciscans.
They have brought the extreme unction.
Brach. On pain of death let no man name death to me:
It is a word most infinitely terrible.
Withdraw into our cabinet.'

The deception practised upon him by Lodovico and Gasparo, who offer him the sacrament in the disguise of Monks, and then discover themselves to damn him, is truly diabolical and ghastly. But the genius that suggested it was as profound as it was lofty. When they are at first introduced, Flamineo says,

> 'See, see how firmly he doth fix his eye
> Upon the crucifix.'

To which Vittoria answers,

> 'Oh, hold it constant:
> It settles his wild spirits; and so his eyes
> Melt into tears.'

The Duchess of Malfy is not, in my judgment, quite so spirited or effectual a performance as the White Devil. But it is distinguished by the same kind of beauties, clad in the same terrors. I do not know but the occasional strokes of passion are even profounder and more Shakespearian; but the story is more laboured, and the horror is accumulated to an overpowering and insupportable height. However appalling to the imagination and finely done, the scenes of the madhouse to which the Duchess is condemned with a view to unsettle her reason, and the interview between her and her brother, where he gives her the supposed dead hand of her husband, exceed, to my thinking, the just bounds of poetry and of tragedy. At least, the merit is of a kind, which, however great, we wish to be rare. A series of such exhibitions obtruded upon the senses or the imagination must tend to stupefy and harden, rather than to exalt the fancy or meliorate the heart. I speak this under correction; but I hope the objection is a venial common-place. In a different style altogether are the directions she gives about her children in her last struggles;

> 'I prythee, look thou giv'st my little boy
> Some syrop for his cold, and let the girl
> Say her pray'rs ere she sleep. Now what death you please—'

and her last word, 'Mercy,' which she recovers just strength enough

to pronounce; her proud answer to her tormentors, who taunt her with her degradation and misery—'But I am Duchess of Malfy still'[1]—as if the heart rose up, like a serpent coiled, to resent the indignities put upon it, and being struck at, struck again; and the staggering reflection her brother makes on her death, 'Cover her face: my eyes dazzle: she died young!' Bosola replies:

> 'I think not so; her infelicity
> Seem'd to have years too many.
> *Ferdinand.* She and I were twins:
> And should I die this instant, I had liv'd
> Her time to a minute.'

This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical commonplaces, but the writhing and conflict, and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself!

The Revenger's Tragedy, by Cyril Tourneur, is the only other drama equal to these and to Shakespear, in 'the dazzling fence of impassioned argument,' in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought, which lay open the soul of feeling. The play, on the whole, does not answer to the expectations it excites; but the appeals of Castiza to her mother, who endeavours to corrupt her virtuous resolutions, 'Mother, come from that poisonous woman there,' with others of the like kind, are of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry, as any of those above mentioned.

In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them, you only think how the persons, into whose mouths certain sentiments are put, would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakespear himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage; and there is no stage-trick to remind us of it. The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small or large capitals. —I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think

[1] 'Am I not thy Duchess?
Bosola. Thou art some great woman, sure; for riot begins to sit on thy forehead (clad in gray hairs) twenty years sooner than on a merry milkmaid's. Thou sleep'st worse than if a mouse should be forced to take up his lodging in a cat's ear: a little infant that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bed-fellow.
Duch. I am Duchess of Malfy still.'

higher still of nature, and next to that, of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had every where cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe every thing to their authors, on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt, while living, and with an epitaph, when dead! Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs. Siddons has left the stage and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal on Salisbury-plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's 'stern good-night,' as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can 'take mine ease at mine inn,' beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespear is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten! Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this sentiment well (perhaps I have borrowed it from him)—

> 'Books, dreams, are both a world; and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good,
> Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness may grow.
> * * * * * * *

Two let me mention dearer than the rest,
The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays.
Oh, might my name be number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!'

I have no sort of pretension to join in the concluding wish of the last stanza; but I trust the writer feels that this aspiration of his early and highest ambition is already not unfulfilled!

LECTURE IV

ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, BEN JONSON, FORD, AND MASSINGER.

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, with all their prodigious merits, appear to me the first writers who in some measure departed from the genuine tragic style of the age of Shakespear. They thought less of their subject, and more of themselves, than some others. They had a great and unquestioned command over the stores both of fancy and passion; but they availed themselves too often of common-place extravagances and theatrical trick. Men at first produce effect by studying nature, and afterwards they look at nature only to produce effect. It is the same in the history of other arts, and of other periods of literature. With respect to most of the writers of this age, their subject was their master. Shakespear was alone, as I have said before, master of his subject; but Beaumont and Fletcher were the first who made a play-thing of it, or a convenient vehicle for the display of their own powers. The example of preceding or contemporary writers had given them facility; the frequency of dramatic exhibition had advanced the popular taste; and this facility of production, and the necessity for appealing to popular applause, tended to vitiate their own taste, and to make them willing to pamper that of the public for novelty and extraordinary effect. There wants something of the sincerity and modesty of the older writers. They do not wait nature's time, or work out her materials patiently and faithfully, but try to anticipate her, and so far defeat themselves. They would have a catastrophe in every scene; so that you have none at

last: they would raise admiration to its height in every line; so that the impression of the whole is comparatively loose and desultory. They pitch the characters at first in too high a key, and exhaust themselves by the eagerness and impatience of their efforts. We find all the prodigality of youth, the confidence inspired by success, an enthusiasm bordering on extravagance, richness running riot, beauty dissolving in its own sweetness. They are like heirs just come to their estates, like lovers in the honey-moon. In the economy of nature's gifts, they 'misuse the bounteous Pan, and thank the Gods amiss.' Their productions shoot up in haste, but bear the marks of precocity and premature decay. Or they are two goodly trees, the stateliest of the forest, crowned with blossoms, and with the verdure springing at their feet; but they do not strike their roots far enough into the ground, and the fruit can hardly ripen for the flowers!

It cannot be denied that they are lyrical and descriptive poets of the first order; every page of their writings is a *florilegium*: they are dramatic poets of the second class, in point of knowledge, variety, vivacity, and effect; there is hardly a passion, character, or situation, which they have not touched in their devious range, and whatever they touched, they adorned with some new grace or striking feature; they are masters of style and versification in almost every variety of melting modulation or sounding pomp, of which they are capable: in comic wit and spirit, they are scarcely surpassed by any writers of any age. There they are in their element, 'like eagles newly baited'; but I speak rather of their serious poetry;—and this, I apprehend, with all its richness, sweetness, loftiness, and grace, wants something —stimulates more than it gratifies, and leaves the mind in a certain sense exhausted and unsatisfied. Their fault is a too ostentatious and indiscriminate display of power. Every thing seems in a state of fermentation and effervescence, and not to have settled and found its centre in their minds. The ornaments, through neglect or abundance, do not always appear sufficiently appropriate: there is evidently a rich wardrobe of words and images, to set off any sentiments that occur, but not equal felicity in the choice of the sentiments to be expressed; the characters in general do not take a substantial form, or excite a growing interest, or leave a permanent impression; the passion does not accumulate by the force of time, of circumstances, and habit, but wastes itself in the first ebullitions of surprise and novelty.

Besides these more critical objections, there is a too frequent mixture of voluptuous softness or effeminacy of character with horror in the subjects, a conscious weakness (I can hardly think it wantonness) of moral constitution struggling with wilful and violent situations, like the tender wings of the moth, attracted to the flame that dazzles

and consumes it. In the hey-day of their youthful ardour, and the intoxication of their animal spirits, they take a perverse delight in tearing up some rooted sentiment, to make a mawkish lamentation over it; and fondly and gratuitously cast the seeds of crimes into forbidden grounds, to see how they will shoot up and vegetate into luxuriance, to catch the eye of fancy. They are not safe teachers of morality: they tamper with it, like an experiment tried *in corpore vili*; and seem to regard the decomposition of the common affections, and the dissolution of the strict bonds of society, as an agreeable study and a careless pastime. The tone of Shakespear's writings is manly and bracing; theirs is at once insipid and meretricious, in the comparison. Shakespear never disturbs the grounds of moral principle; but leaves his characters (after doing them heaped justice on all sides) to be judged of by our common sense and natural feeling. Beaumont and Fletcher constantly bring in equivocal sentiments and characters, as if to set them up to be debated by sophistical casuistry, or varnished over with the colours of poetical ingenuity. Or Shakespear may be said to 'cast the diseases of the mind, only to restore it to a sound and pristine health': the dramatic paradoxes of Beaumont and Fletcher are, to all appearance, tinctured with an infusion of personal vanity and laxity of principle. I do not say that this was the character of the men; but it strikes me as the character of their minds. The two things are very distinct. The greatest purists (hypocrisy apart) are often free-livers; and some of the most unguarded professors of a general license of behaviour, have been the last persons to take the benefit of their own doctrine, from which they reap nothing, but the obloquy and the pleasure of startling their 'wonder-wounded' hearers. There is a division of labour, even in vice. Some persons addict themselves to the speculation only, others to the practice. The peccant humours of the body or the mind break out in different ways. One man *sows his wild oats* in his neighbour's field: another on Mount Parnassus; from whence, borne on the breath of fame, they may hope to spread and fructify to distant times and regions. Of the latter class were our poets, who, I believe, led unexceptionable lives, and only indulged their imaginations in occasional unwarrantable liberties with the Muses. What makes them more inexcusable, and confirms this charge against them, is, that they are always abusing 'wanton poets,' as if willing to shift suspicion from themselves.

Beaumont and Fletcher were the first also who laid the foundation of the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets, by aiming at a profusion of ambitious ornaments, and by translating the commonest circumstances into the language of metaphor and passion. It is this misplaced and inordinate craving after striking

effect and continual excitement that had at one time rendered our poetry the most vapid of all things, by not leaving the moulds of poetic diction to be filled up by the overflowings of nature and passion, but by swelling out ordinary and unmeaning topics to certain preconceived and indispensable standards of poetical elevation and grandeur. —I shall endeavour to confirm this praise, mixed with unwilling blame, by remarking on a few of their principal tragedies. If I have done them injustice, the resplendent passages I have to quote will set every thing to rights.

The Maid's Tragedy is one of the poorest. The nature of the distress is of the most disagreeable and repulsive kind; and not the less so, because it is entirely improbable and uncalled-for. There is no sort of reason, or no sufficient reason to the reader's mind, why the king should marry off his mistress to one of his courtiers, why he should pitch upon the worthiest for this purpose, why he should, by such a choice, break off Amintor's match with the sister of another principal support of his throne (whose death is the consequence), why he should insist on the inviolable fidelity of his former mistress to him after she is married, and why her husband should thus inevitably be made acquainted with his dishonour, and roused to madness and revenge, except the mere love of mischief, and gratuitous delight in torturing the feelings of others, and tempting one's own fate. The character of Evadne, however, her naked, unblushing impudence, the mixture of folly with vice, her utter insensibility to any motive but her own pride and inclination, her heroic superiority to any signs of shame or scruples of conscience from a recollection of what is due to herself or others, are well described; and the lady is true to herself in her repentance, which is owing to nothing but the accidental impulse and whim of the moment. The deliberate voluntary disregard of all moral ties and all pretence to virtue, in the structure of the fable, is nearly unaccountable. Amintor (who is meant to be the hero of the piece) is a feeble, irresolute character: his slavish, recanting loyalty to his prince, who has betrayed and dishonoured him, is of a piece with the tyranny and insolence of which he is made the sport; and even his tardy revenge is snatched from his hands, and he kills his former betrothed and beloved mistress, instead of executing vengeance on the man who has destroyed his peace of mind and unsettled her intellects. The king, however, meets his fate from the penitent fury of Evadne; and on this account, the Maid's Tragedy was forbidden to be acted in the reign of Charles II. as countenancing the doctrine of regicide. Aspatia is a beautiful sketch of resigned and heart-broken melancholy; and Calianax, a blunt, satirical courtier, is a character of much humour

and novelty. There are striking passages here and there, but fewer than in almost any of their plays. Amintor's speech to Evadne, when she makes confession of her unlooked-for remorse, is, I think, the finest.

> ——'Do not mock me:
> Though I am tame, and bred up with my wrongs,
> Which are my foster-brothers, I may leap,
> Like a hand-wolf, into my natural wildness,
> And do an outrage. Prithee, do not mock me!'

KING AND NO KING, which is on a strangely chosen subject as strangely treated, is very superior in power and effect. There is an unexpected reservation in the plot, which, in some measure, relieves the painfulness of the impression. Arbaces is painted in gorgeous, but not alluring colours. His vain-glorious pretensions and impatience of contradiction are admirably displayed, and are so managed as to produce an involuntary comic effect to temper the lofty tone of tragedy, particularly in the scenes in which he affects to treat his vanquished enemy with such condescending kindness; and perhaps this display of upstart pride was meant by the authors as an oblique satire on his low origin, which is afterwards discovered. His pride of self-will and fierce impetuosity, are the same in war and in love. The haughty voluptuousness and pampered effeminacy of his character admit neither respect for his misfortunes, nor pity for his errors. His ambition is a fever in the blood; and his love is a sudden transport of ungovernable caprice that brooks no restraint, and is intoxicated with the lust of power, even in the lap of pleasure, and the sanctuary of the affections. The passion of Panthea is, as it were, a reflection from, and lighted at the shrine of her lover's flagrant vanity. In the elevation of his rank, and in the consciousness of his personal accomplishments, he seems firmly persuaded (and by sympathy to persuade others) that there is nothing in the world which can be an object of liking or admiration but himself. The first birth and declaration of this perverted sentiment to himself, when he meets with Panthea after his return from conquest, fostered by his presumptuous infatuation and the heat of his inflammable passions, and the fierce and lordly tone in which he repels the suggestion of the natural obstacles to his sudden phrenzy, are in Beaumont and Fletcher's most daring manner: but the rest is not equal. What may be called the love-scenes are equally gross and commonplace; and instead of any thing like delicacy or a struggle of different feelings, have all the indecency and familiarity of a brothel. Bessus, a comic character in this play, is a swaggering coward, something between Parolles and Falstaff.

The False One is an indirect imitation of Antony and Cleopatra. We have Septimius for Œnobarbas and Cæsar for Antony. Cleopatra herself is represented in her girlish state, but she is made divine in

'Youth that opens like perpetual spring,'

and promises the rich harvest of love and pleasure that succeeds it. Her first presenting herself before Cæsar, when she is brought in by Sceva, and the impression she makes upon him, like a vision dropt from the clouds, or

'Like some celestial sweetness, the treasure of soft love.'

are exquisitely conceived. Photinus is an accomplished villain, well-read in crooked policy and quirks of state; and the description of Pompey has a solemnity and grandeur worthy of his unfortunate end. Septimius says, bringing in his lifeless head,

'Tis here, 'tis done! Behold, you fearful viewers,
Shake, and behold the model of the world here,
The pride and strength! Look, look again, 'tis finished!
That that whole armies, nay, whole nations,
Many and mighty kings, have been struck blind at,
And fled before, wing'd with their fear and terrors,
That steel War waited on, and Fortune courted,
That high-plum'd Honour built up for her own;
Behold that mightiness, behold that fierceness,
Behold that child of war, with all his glories,
By this poor hand made breathless!'

And again Cæsar says of him, who was his mortal enemy (it was not held the fashion in those days, nor will it be held so in time to come, to lampoon those whom you have vanquished)—

——'Oh thou conqueror,
Thou glory of the world once, now the pity,
Thou awe of nations, wherefore didst thou fall thus?
What poor fate followed thee, and plucked thee on
To trust thy sacred life to an Egyptian?
The life and light of Rome to a blind stranger,
That honourable war ne'er taught a nobleness,
Not worthy circumstance shew'd what a man was?
That never heard thy name sung but in banquets,
And loose lascivious pleasures? to a boy,
That had no faith to comprehend thy greatness,
No study of thy life to know thy goodness?
Egyptians, do you think your highest pyramids,
Built to outdure the sun, as you suppose,
Where your unworthy kings lie raked in ashes,
Are monuments fit for him! No, brood of Nilus,

Nothing can cover his high fame but heaven;
No pyramids set off his memories,
But the eternal substance of his greatness,
To which I leave him.'

It is something worth living for, to write or even read such poetry as this is, or to know that it has been written, or that there have been subjects on which to write it!—This, of all Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, comes the nearest in style and manner to Shakespear, not excepting the first act of the Two Noble Kinsmen, which has been sometimes attributed to him.

The FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS by Fletcher alone, is 'a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.' The author has in it given a loose to his fancy, and his fancy was his most delightful and genial quality, where, to use his own words,

'He takes most ease, and grows ambitious
Thro' his own wanton fire and pride delicious.'

The songs and lyrical descriptions throughout are luxuriant and delicate in a high degree. He came near to Spenser in a certain tender and voluptuous sense of natural beauty; he came near to Shakespear in the playful and fantastic expression of it. The whole composition is an exquisite union of dramatic and pastoral poetry; where the local descriptions receive a tincture from the sentiments and purposes of the speaker, and each character, cradled in the lap of nature, paints 'her virgin fancies wild' with romantic grace and classic elegance.

The place and its employments are thus described by Chloe to Thenot:

——'Here be woods as green
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
As where smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine; caves, and dells;
Chuse where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes, to make many a ring
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies;
How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep

Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest.'

There are few things that can surpass in truth and beauty of allegorical description, the invocation of Amaryllis to the God of Shepherds, Pan, to save her from the violence of the Sullen Shepherd, for Syrinx' sake:

——'For her dear sake,
That loves the rivers' brinks, and still doth shake
In cold remembrance of thy quick pursuit!'

Or again, the friendly Satyr promises Clorin—

'Brightest, if there be remaining
Any service, without feigning
I will do it; were I set
To catch the nimble wind, or get
Shadows gliding on the green.'

It would be a task no less difficult than this, to follow the flight of the poet's Muse, or catch her fleeting graces, fluttering her golden wings, and singing in notes angelical of youth, of love, and joy!

There is only one affected and ridiculous character in this drama, that of Thenot in love with Clorin. He is attached to her for her inviolable fidelity to her buried husband, and wishes her not to grant his suit, lest it should put an end to his passion. Thus he pleads to her against himself:

——'If you yield, I die
To all affection; 'tis that loyalty
You tie unto this grave I so admire;
And yet there 's something else I would desire,
If you would hear me, but withal deny.
Oh Pan, what an uncertain destiny
Hangs over all my hopes! I will retire;
For if I longer stay, this double fire
Will lick my life up.'

This is paltry quibbling. It is spurious logic, not genuine feeling. A pedant may hang his affections on the point of a dilemma in this manner; but nature does not sophisticate; or when she does, it is to gain her ends, not to defeat them.

The Sullen Shepherd turns out too dark a character in the end, and gives a shock to the gentle and pleasing sentiments inspired throughout.

The resemblance of Comus to this poem is not so great as has

been sometimes contended, nor are the particular allusions important or frequent. Whatever Milton copied, he made his own. In reading the Faithful Shepherdess, we find ourselves breathing the moonlight air under the cope of heaven, and wander by forest side or fountain, among fresh dews and flowers, following our vagrant fancies, or smit with the love of nature's works. In reading Milton's Comus, and most of his other works, we seem to be entering a lofty dome raised over our heads and ascending to the skies, and as if nature and every thing in it were but a temple and an image consecrated by the poet's art to the worship of virtue and pure religion. The speech of Clorin, after she has been alarmed by the Satyr, is the only one of which Milton has made a free use.

'And all my fears go with thee,
What greatness or what private hidden power
Is there in me to draw submission
From this rude man and beast? Sure I am mortal:
The daughter of a shepherd; he was mortal,
And she that bore me mortal: prick my hand,
And it will bleed; a fever shakes me, and
The self-same wind that makes the young lambs shrink,
Makes me a-cold: my fear says, I am mortal.
Yet I have heard, (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it), if I keep
My virgin flow'r uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me in dead of night
To make me follow, and so tole me on
Thro' mire and standing pools to find my ruin;
Else, why should this rough thing, who never knew
Manners, nor smooth humanity, whose heats
Are rougher than himself, and more mishapen,
Thus mildly kneel to me? Sure there 's a pow'r
In that great name of Virgin, that binds fast
All rude uncivil bloods, all appetites
That break their confines: then, strong Chastity,
Be thou my strongest guard, for here I 'll dwell,
In opposition against fate and hell!'

Ben Jonson's Sad Shepherd comes nearer it in style and spirit, but still with essential differences, like the two men, and without any appearance of obligation. Ben's is more homely and grotesque, Fletcher's is more visionary and fantastical. I hardly know which to prefer. If Fletcher has the advantage in general power and

sentiment, Jonson is superior in *naiveté* and truth of local colouring.

The Two Noble Kinsmen is another monument of Fletcher's genius; and it is said also of Shakespear's. The style of the first act has certainly more weight, more abruptness, and more involution, than the general style of Fletcher, with fewer softenings and fillings-up to sheathe the rough projecting points and piece the disjointed fragments together. For example, the compliment of Theseus to one of the Queens, that Hercules

> 'Tumbled him down upon his Nemean hide,
> And swore his sinews thaw'd'

at sight of her beauty, is in a bolder and more masculine vein than Fletcher usually aimed at. Again, the supplicating address of the distressed Queen to Hippolita,

> ——'Lend us a knee:
> But touch the ground for us no longer time
> Than a dove's motion, when the head 's pluck'd off'—

is certainly in the manner of Shakespear, with his subtlety and strength of illustration. But, on the other hand, in what immediately follows, relating to their husbands left dead in the field of battle,

> 'Tell him if he i' th' blood-siz'd field lay swoln,
> Shewing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon,
> What you would do'—

I think we perceive the extravagance of Beaumont and Fletcher, not contented with truth or strength of description, but hurried away by the love of violent excitement into an image of disgust and horror, not called for, and not at all proper in the mouth into which it is put. There is a studied exaggeration of the sentiment, and an evident imitation of the parenthetical interruptions and breaks in the line, corresponding to what we sometimes meet in Shakespear, as in the speeches of Leontes in the Winter's Tale; but the sentiment is overdone, and the style merely mechanical. Thus Hippolita declares, on her lord's going to the wars,

> 'We have been soldiers, and we cannot weep,
> When our friends don their helms, or put to sea,
> Or tell of babes broach'd on the lance, or women
> That have seethed their infants in (and after eat them)
> The brine they wept at killing 'em; then if
> You stay to see of us such spinsters, we
> Should hold you here forever.'

One might apply to this sort of poetry what Marvel says of some sort of passions, that it is

> 'Tearing our pleasures with rough strife
> Thorough the iron gates of life.'

It is not in the true spirit of Shakespear, who was 'born only heir to all humanity,' whose horrors were not gratuitous, and who did not harrow up the feelings for the sake of making mere *bravura* speeches. There are also in this first act, several repetitions of Shakespear's phraseology: a thing that seldom or never occurs in his own works. For instance,

> ——'Past slightly
> *His careless execution*'—
> '*The very lees* of such, millions of rates
> Exceed *the wine* of others'—
> ——'Let *the event*,
> That *never-erring arbitrator*, tell us'—
> 'Like *old importment's bastard*'—

There are also words that are never used by Shakespear in a similar sense:

> ——'All our surgeons
> *Convent* in their behoof'—
> 'We *convent* nought else but woes'—

In short, it appears to me that the first part of this play was written in imitation of Shakespear's manner; but I see no reason to suppose that it was his, but the common tradition, which is however by no means well established. The subsequent acts are confessedly Fletcher's, and the imitations of Shakespear which occur there (not of Shakespear's manner as differing from his, but as it was congenial to his own spirit and feeling of nature) are glorious in themselves, and exalt our idea of the great original which could give birth to such magnificent conceptions in another. The conversation of Palamon and Arcite in prison is of this description—the outline is evidently taken from that of Guiderius, Arviragus, and Bellarius in Cymbeline, but filled up with a rich profusion of graces that make it his own again.

> '*Pal.* How do you, noble cousin?
> *Arc.* How do you, Sir?
> *Pal.* Why, strong enough to laugh at misery,
> And bear the chance of war yet. We are prisoners,
> I fear for ever, cousin.

Arc. I believe it;
And to that destiny have patiently
Laid up my hour to come.
Pal. Oh, cousin Arcite,
Where is Thebes now? where is our noble country?
Where are our friends and kindreds? Never more
Must we behold those comforts; never see
The hardy youths strive for the games of honour,
Hung with the painted favours of their ladies,
Like tall ships under sail: then start amongst 'em,
And as an east wind, leave 'em all behind us
Like lazy clouds, whilst Palamon and Arcite,
Even in the wagging of a wanton leg,
Outstript the people's praises, won the garlands,
Ere they have time to wish 'em ours. Oh, never
Shall we two exercise, like twins of honour,
Our arms again, and feel our fiery horses,
Like proud seas under us! Our good swords now
(Better the red-eyed God of war ne'er wore)
Ravish'd our sides, like age, must run to rust,
And deck the temples of those Gods that hate us:
These hands shall never draw 'em out like lightning,
To blast whole armies more.
Arc. No, Palamon,
Those hopes are prisoners with us: here we are,
And here the graces of our youth must wither,
Like a too-timely spring: here age must find us,
And which is heaviest, Palamon, unmarried;
The sweet embraces of a loving wife
Loaden with kisses, arm'd with thousand Cupids,
Shall never clasp our necks! No issue know us,
No figures of ourselves shall we e'er see,
To glad our age, and like young eaglets teach 'em
Boldly to gaze against bright arms, and say,
Remember what your fathers were, and conquer!
The fair-eyed maids shall weep our banishments,
And in their songs curse ever-blinded fortune,
Till she for shame see what a wrong she has done
To youth and nature. This is all our world:
We shall know nothing here, but one another;
Hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes;
The vine shall grow, but we shall never see it;
Summer shall come, and with her all delights,
But dead-cold winter must inhabit here still.
Pal. 'Tis too true, Arcite! To our Theban hounds,
That shook the aged forest with their echoes,
No more now must we halloo; no more shake
Our pointed javelins, while the angry swine
Flies like a Parthian quiver from our rages,

Struck with our well-steel'd darts! All valiant uses
(The food and nourishment of noble minds)
In us two here shall perish; we shall die
(Which is the curse of honour) lazily,
Children of grief and ignorance.
Arc. Yet, cousin,
Even from the bottom of these miseries,
From all that fortune can inflict upon us,
I see two comforts rising, two mere blessings,
If the Gods please to hold here; a brave patience,
And the enjoying of our griefs together.
Whilst Palamon is with me, let me perish
If I think this our prison!
Pal. Certainly,
'Tis a main goodness, cousin, that our fortunes
Were twinn'd together; 'tis most true, two souls
Put in two noble bodies, let 'em suffer
The gall of hazard, so they grow together,
Will never sink; they must not; say they could,
A willing man dies sleeping, and all 's done.
Arc. Shall we make worthy uses of this place,
That all men hate so much?
Pal. How, gentle cousin?
Arc. Let 's think this prison a holy sanctuary
To keep us from corruption of worse men!
We 're young, and yet desire the ways of honour:
That, liberty and common conversation,
The poison of pure spirits, might, like women,
Woo us to wander from. What worthy blessing
Can be, but our imaginations
May make it ours? And here, being thus together,
We are an endless mine to one another;
We 're father, friends, acquaintance;
We are, in one another, families;
I am your heir, and you are mine; this place
Is our inheritance; no hard oppressor
Dare take this from us; here, with a little patience,
We shall live long, and loving; no surfeits seek us:
The hand of war hurts none here, nor the seas
Swallow their youth; were we at liberty,
A wife might part us lawfully, or business;
Quarrels consume us; envy of ill men
Crave our acquaintance; I might sicken, cousin,
Where you should never know it, and so perish
Without your noble hand to close mine eyes,
Or prayers to the Gods: a thousand chances,
Were we from hence, would sever us.
Pal. You have made me
(I thank you, cousin Arcite) almost wanton

With my captivity; what a misery
It is to live abroad, and every where!
'Tis like a beast, methinks! I find the court here,
I 'm sure a more content; and all those pleasures,
That woo the wills of men to vanity,
I see thro' now: and am sufficient
To tell the world, 'tis but a gaudy shadow
That old time, as he passes by, takes with him.
What had we been, old in the court of Creon,
Where sin is justice, lust and ignorance
The virtues of the great ones? Cousin Arcite,
Had not the loving Gods found this place for us,
We had died as they do, ill old men unwept,
And had their epitaphs, the people's curses!
Shall I say more?
Arc. I would hear you still.
Pal. You shall.
Is there record of any two that lov'd
Better than we do, Arcite?
Arc. Sure there cannot.
Pal. I do not think it possible our friendship
Should ever leave us.
Arc. Till our deaths it cannot.'

Thus they 'sing their bondage freely:' but just then enters Æmilia, who parts all this friendship between them, and turns them to deadliest foes.

The jailor's daughter, who falls in love with Palamon, and goes mad, is a wretched interpolation in the story, and a fantastic copy of Ophelia. But they readily availed themselves of all the dramatic common-places to be found in Shakespear, love, madness, processions, sports, imprisonment, &c. and copied him too often in earnest, to have a right to parody him, as they sometimes did, in jest.—The story of the Two Noble Kinsmen is taken from Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite; but the latter part, which in Chaucer is full of dramatic power and interest, degenerates in the play into a mere narrative of the principal events, and possesses little value or effect.—It is not improbable that Beaumont and Fletcher's having dramatised this story, put Dryden upon modernising it.

I cannot go through all Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas (52 in number), but I have mentioned some of the principal, and the excellences and defects of the rest may be judged of from these. The Bloody Brother, A Wife for a Month, Bonduca, Thierry and Theodoret, are among the best of their tragedies: among the comedies, the Night Walker, the Little French Lawyer, and Monsieur Thomas, come perhaps next to the Chances, the Wild Goose Chase, and Rule

a Wife and Have a Wife.—Philaster, or Love lies a Bleeding, is one of the most admirable productions of these authors (the last I shall mention); and the patience of Euphrasia, disguised as Bellario, the tenderness of Arethusa, and the jealousy of Philaster, are beyond all praise. The passages of extreme romantic beauty and high-wrought passion that I might quote, are out of number. One only must suffice, the account of the commencement of Euphrasia's love to Philaster.

——'Sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a God
I thought (but it was you) enter our gates;
My blood flew out, and back again as fast
As I had puffed it forth and suck'd it in
Like breath; then was I called away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man
Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, rais'd
So high in thoughts as I: you left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you forever. I did hear you talk
Far above singing!'

And so it is our poets themselves write, 'far above singing.'[1] I am loth to part with them, and wander down, as we now must,

'Into a lower world, to theirs obscure
And wild—To breathe in other air
Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits.'

Ben Jonson's serious productions are, in my opinion, superior to his comic ones. What he does, is the result of strong sense and painful industry; but sense and industry agree better with the grave and severe, than with the light and gay productions of the Muse. 'His plays were works,' as some one said of them, 'while others' works were plays.' The observation had less of compliment than of truth in it. He may be said to mine his way into a subject, like a mole, and throws up a prodigious quantity of matter on the surface, so that the richer the soil in which he labours, the less dross and rubbish we have. His fault is, that he sets himself too much to his subject, and cannot let go his hold of an idea, after the insisting on it becomes tiresome or painful to others. But his tenaciousness of what is grand and lofty, is more praiseworthy than his delight in

[1] Euphrasia as the Page, just before speaking of her life, which Philaster threatens to take from her, says,

——'Tis not a life;
'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away.'

What exquisite beauty and delicacy!

what is low and disagreeable. His pedantry accords better with didactic pomp than with illiterate and vulgar gabble; his learning engrafted on romantic tradition or classical history, looks like genius.

'*Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma.*'

He was equal, by an effort, to the highest things, and took the same, and even more successful pains to grovel to the lowest. He raised himself up or let himself down to the level of his subject, by ponderous machinery. By dint of application, and a certain strength of nerve, he could do justice to Tacitus and Sallust no less than to mine Host of the New Inn. His tragedy of the Fall of Sejanus, in particular, is an admirable piece of ancient mosaic. The principal character gives one the idea of a lofty column of solid granite, nodding to its base from its pernicious height, and dashed in pieces, by a breath of air, a word of its creator—feared, not pitied, scorned, unwept, and forgotten. The depth of knowledge and gravity of expression sustain one another throughout: the poet has worked out the historian's outline, so that the vices and passions, the ambition and servility of public men, in the heated and poisoned atmosphere of a luxurious and despotic court, were never described in fuller or more glowing colours.—I am half afraid to give any extracts, lest they should be tortured into an application to other times and characters than those referred to by the poet. Some of the sounds, indeed, may bear (for what I know), an awkward construction: some of the objects may look double to squint-eyed suspicion. But that is not my fault. It only proves, that the characters of prophet and poet are implied in each other; that he who describes human nature well once, describes it for good and all, as it was, is, and I begin to fear, will ever be. Truth always was, and must always remain a libel to the tyrant and the slave. Thus Satrius Secundus and Pinnarius Natta, two public informers in those days, are described as

> 'Two of Sejanus' blood-hounds, whom he breeds
> With human flesh, to bay at citizens.'

But Rufus, another of the same well-bred gang, debating the point of his own character with two Senators whom he has entrapped, boldly asserts, in a more courtly strain,

> '——To be a spy on traitors,
> Is honourable vigilance.'

This sentiment of the respectability of the employment of a government spy, which had slept in Tacitus for near two thousand

years, has not been without its modern patrons. The effects of such 'honourable vigilance' are very finely exposed in the following high-spirited dialogue between Lepidus and Arruntius, two noble Romans, who loved their country, but were not fashionable enough to confound their country with its oppressors, and the extinguishers of its liberty.

'*Arr.* What are thy arts (good patriot, teach them me)
That have preserv'd thy hairs to this white dye,
And kept so reverend and so dear a head
Safe on his comely shoulders?
Lep. Arts, Arruntius!
None but the plain and passive fortitude
To suffer and be silent; never stretch
These arms against the torrent; live at home,
With my own thoughts and innocence about me,
Not tempting the wolves' jaws: these are my arts.
Arr. I would begin to study 'em, if I thought
They would secure me. May I pray to Jove
In secret, and be safe? aye, or aloud?
With open wishes? so I do not mention
Tiberius or Sejanus? Yes, I must,
If I speak out. 'Tis hard, that. May I think,
And not be rack'd? What danger is't to dream?
Talk in one's sleep, or cough! Who knows the law?
May I shake my head without a comment? Say
It rains, or it holds up, and not be thrown
Upon the Gemonies? These now are things,
Whereon men's fortunes, yea, their fate depends:
Nothing hath privilege 'gainst the violent ear.
No place, no day, no hour (we see) is free
(Not our religious and most sacred times)
From some one kind of cruelty; all matter,
Nay, all occasion pleaseth. Madman's rage,
The idleness of drunkards, women's nothing,
Jesters' simplicity, all, all is good
That can be catch'd at.'

'Tis a pretty picture; and the duplicates of it, though multiplied without end, are seldom out of request.

The following portrait of a prince besieged by flatterers (taken from Tiberius) has unrivalled force and beauty, with historic truth.

——'If this man
Had but a mind allied unto his words,
How blest a fate were it to us, and Rome?
Men are deceived, who think there can be thrall

Under a virtuous prince. Wish'd liberty
Ne'er lovelier looks than under such a crown.
But when his grace is merely but lip-good,
And that, no longer than he airs himself
Abroad in public, there to seem to shun
The strokes and stripes of flatterers, which within
Are lechery unto him, and so feed
His brutish sense with their afflicting sound,
As (dead to virtue) he permits himself
Be carried like a pitcher by the ears
To every act of vice; this is a case
Deserves our fear, and doth presage the nigh
And close approach of bloody tyranny.
Flattery is midwife unto princes' rage:
And nothing sooner doth help forth a tyrant
Than that, and whisperers' grace, that have the time,
The place, the power, to make all men offenders!'

The only part of this play in which Ben Jonson has completely forgotten himself, (or rather seems not to have done so), is in the conversations between Livia and Eudemus, about a wash for her face, here called a *fucus*, to appear before Sejanus. Catiline's Conspiracy does not furnish by any means an equal number of striking passages, and is spun out to an excessive length with Cicero's artificial and affected orations against Catiline, and in praise of himself. His apologies for his own eloquence, and declarations that in all his art he uses no art at all, put one in mind of Polonius's circuitous way of coming to the point. Both these tragedies, it might be observed, are constructed on the exact principles of a French historical picture, where every head and figure is borrowed from the antique; but somehow, the precious materials of old Roman history and character are better preserved in Jonson's page than on David's canvas.

Two of the most poetical passages in Ben Jonson, are the description of Echo in Cynthia's Revels, and the fine comparison of the mind to a temple, in the New Inn; a play which, on the whole, however, I can read with no patience.

I must hasten to conclude this Lecture with some account of Massinger and Ford, who wrote in the time of Charles I. I am sorry I cannot do it *con amore*. The writers of whom I have chiefly had to speak were true poets, impassioned, fanciful, 'musical as is Apollo's lute;' but Massinger is harsh and crabbed, Ford finical and fastidious. I find little in the works of these two dramatists, but a display of great strength and subtlety of understanding, inveteracy of purpose, and perversity of will. This is not exactly what

we look for in poetry, which, according to the most approved recipes, should combine pleasure with profit, and not owe all its fascination over the mind to its power of shocking or perplexing us. The Muses should attract by grace or dignity of mien. Massinger makes an impression by hardness and repulsiveness of manner. In the intellectual processes which he delights to describe, 'reason panders will:' he fixes arbitrarily on some object which there is no motive to pursue, or every motive combined against it, and then by screwing up his heroes or heroines to the deliberate and blind accomplishment of this, thinks to arrive at 'the true pathos and sublime of human life.' That is not the way. He seldom touches the heart or kindles the fancy. It is in vain to hope to excite much sympathy with convulsive efforts of the will, or intricate contrivances of the understanding, to obtain that which is better left alone, and where the interest arises principally from the conflict between the absurdity of the passion and the obstinacy with which it is persisted in. For the most part, his villains are a sort of *lusus naturæ*; his impassioned characters are like drunkards or madmen. Their conduct is extreme and outrageous, their motives unaccountable and weak; their misfortunes are without necessity, and their crimes without temptation, to ordinary apprehensions. I do not say that this is invariably the case in all Massinger's scenes, but I think it will be found that a principle of playing at cross-purposes is the ruling passion throughout most of them. This is the case in the tragedy of the Unnatural Combat, in the Picture, the Duke of Milan, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, and even in the Bondman, and the Virgin Martyr, &c. In the Picture, Matthias nearly loses his wife's affections, by resorting to the far-fetched and unnecessary device of procuring a magical portrait to read the slightest variation in her thoughts. In the same play, Honoria risks her reputation and her life to gain a clandestine interview with Matthias, merely to shake his fidelity to his wife, and when she has gained her object, tells the king her husband in pure caprice and fickleness of purpose. The Virgin Martyr is nothing but a tissue of instantaneous conversions to and from Paganism and Christianity. The only scenes of any real beauty and tenderness in this play, are those between Dorothea and Angelo, her supposed friendless beggar-boy, but her guardian angel in disguise, which are understood to be by Deckar. The interest of the Bondman turns upon two different acts of penance and self-denial, in the persons of the hero and heroine, Pisander and Cleora. In the Duke of Milan (the most poetical of Massinger's productions), Sforza's resolution to destroy his wife, rather than bear the thought of her surviving him, is as much out of the verge of nature and probability, as it is unexpected and revolt-

ing, from the want of any circumstances of palliation leading to it. It stands out alone, a pure piece of voluntary atrocity, which seems not the dictate of passion, but a start of phrensy; as cold-blooded in the execution as it is extravagant in the conception.

Again, Francesco, in this play, is a person whose actions we are at a loss to explain till the conclusion of the piece, when the attempt to account for them from motives originally amiable and generous, only produces a double sense of incongruity, and instead of satisfying the mind, renders it totally incredulous. He endeavours to seduce the wife of his benefactor, he then (failing) attempts her death, slanders her foully, and wantonly causes her to be slain by the hand of her husband, and has him poisoned by a nefarious stratagem, and all this to appease a high sense of injured honour, that 'felt a stain like a wound,' and from the tender overflowings of fraternal affection, his sister having, it appears, been formerly betrothed to, and afterwards deserted by, the Duke of Milan. Sir Giles Overreach is the most successful and striking effort of Massinger's pen, and the best known to the reader, but it will hardly be thought to form an exception to the tenour of the above remarks.[1] The same spirit of

[1] The following criticism on this play has appeared in another publication, but may be not improperly inserted here:

'A New Way to Pay Old Debts is certainly a very admirable play, and highly characteristic of the genius of its author, which was hard and forcible, and calculated rather to produce a strong impression than a pleasing one. There is considerable unity of design and a progressive interest in the fable, though the artifice by which the catastrophe is brought about, (the double assumption of the character of favoured lovers by Wellborn and Lovell), is somewhat improbable, and out of date; and the moral is peculiarly striking, because its whole weight falls upon one who all along prides himself in setting every principle of justice and all fear of consequences at defiance.

'The character of Sir Giles Overreach (the most prominent feature of the play, whether in the perusal, or as it is acted) interests us less by exciting our sympathy than our indignation. We hate him very heartily, and yet not enough; for he has strong, robust points about him that repel the impertinence of censure, and he sometimes succeeds in making us stagger in our opinion of his conduct, by throwing off any idle doubts or scruples that might hang upon it in his own mind, 'like dew-drops from the lion's mane.' His steadiness of purpose scarcely stands in need of support from the common sanctions of morality, which he intrepidly breaks through, and he almost conquers our prejudices by the consistent and determined manner in which he braves them. Self-interest is his idol, and he makes no secret of his idolatry: he is only a more devoted and unblushing worshipper at this shrine than other men. Self-will is the only rule of his conduct, to which he makes every other feeling bend: or rather, from the nature of his constitution, he has no sickly, sentimental obstacles to interrupt him in his headstrong career. He is a character of obdurate self-will, without fanciful notions or natural affections; one who has no regard to the feelings of others, and who professes an equal disregard to their opinions. He minds nothing but his own ends, and takes the shortest and surest way to them. His understanding is clear-sighted,

caprice and sullenness survives in Rowe's Fair Penitent, taken from this author's Fatal Dowry.

Ford is not so great a favourite with me as with some others, from whose judgment I dissent with diffidence. It has been lamented that the play of his which has been most admired ('Tis Pity She's a Whore) had not a less exceptionable subject. I do not know, but I suspect that the exceptionableness of the subject is that which constitutes the chief merit of the play. The repulsiveness of the story is what gives it its critical interest; for it is a studiously prosaic statement of facts, and naked declaration of passions. It was not the least of Shakespear's praise, that he never tampered with unfair subjects. His genius was above it; his taste kept aloof from it. I do not deny the power of simple painting and polished style in

and his passions strong-nerved. Sir Giles is no flincher, and no hypocrite; and he gains almost as much by the hardihood with which he avows his impudent and sordid designs as others do by their caution in concealing them. He is the demon of selfishness personified; and carves out his way to the objects of his unprincipled avarice and ambition with an arm of steel, that strikes but does not feel the blow it inflicts. The character of calculating, systematic self-love, as the master-key to all his actions, is preserved with great truth of keeping and in the most trifling circumstances. Thus ruminating to himself he says, "I'll walk, to get me an appetite: 'tis but a mile; and exercise will keep me from being pursy!"—Yet to show the absurdity and impossibility of a man's being governed by any such pretended exclusive regard to his own interest, this very Sir Giles, who laughs at conscience, and scorns opinion, who ridicules every thing as fantastical but wealth, solid, substantial wealth, and boasts of himself as having been the founder of his own fortune, by his contempt for every other consideration, is ready to sacrifice the whole of his enormous possessions—to what?—to a title, a sound, to make his daughter "right honourable," the wife of a lord whose name he cannot repeat without loathing, and in the end he becomes the dupe of, and falls a victim to, that very opinion of the world which he despises!

The character of Sir Giles Overreach has been found fault with as unnatural; and it may, perhaps, in the present refinement of our manners, have become in a great measure obsolete. But we doubt whether even still, in remote and insulated parts of the country, sufficient traces of the same character of wilful selfishness, mistaking the inveteracy of its purposes for their rectitude, and boldly appealing to power as justifying the abuses of power, may not be found to warrant this an undoubted original—probably a fac-simile of some individual of the poet's actual acquaintance. In less advanced periods of society than that in which we live, if we except rank, which can neither be an object of common pursuit nor immediate attainment, money is the only acknowledged passport to respect. It is not merely valuable as a security from want, but it is the only defence against the insolence of power. Avarice is sharpened by pride and necessity. There are then few of the arts, the amusements, and accomplishments that soften and sweeten life, that raise or refine it: the only way in which any one can be of service to himself or another, is by his command over the gross commodities of life; and a man is worth just so much as he has. Where he who is not 'lord of acres' is looked upon as a slave and a beggar, the soul becomes wedded to the soil by which its worth is measured, and takes root in it in proportion to its own strength and

this tragedy in general, and of a great deal more in some few of the scenes, particularly in the quarrel between Annabella and her husband, which is wrought up to a pitch of demoniac scorn and phrensy with consummate art and knowledge; but I do not find much other power in the author (generally speaking) than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons. And what confirms me in this opinion is the comparative inefficiency of his other plays. Except the last scene of the Broken Heart (which I think extravagant—others may think it sublime, and be right) they are merely exercises of style and effusions of wire-drawn sentiment. Where they have not the sting of illicit passion, they are quite pointless, and seem painted on gauze, or spun of cobwebs. The affected brevity and

stubbornness of character. The example of Wellborn may be cited in illustration of these remarks. The loss of his land makes all the difference between "young master Wellborn" and "rogue Wellborn;" and the treatment he meets with in this latter capacity is the best apology for the character of Sir Giles. Of the two it is better to be the oppressor than the oppressed.

'Massinger, it is true, dealt generally in extreme characters, as well as in very repulsive ones. The passion is with him wound up to its height at once, and he never lets it down afterwards. It does not gradually arise out of previous circumstances, nor is it modified by other passions. This gives an appearance of abruptness, violence, and extravagance to all his plays. Shakespear's characters act from mixed motives, and are made what they are by various circumstances. Massinger's characters act from single motives, and become what they are, and remain so, by a pure effort of the will, in spite of circumstances. This last author endeavoured to embody an abstract principle; labours hard to bring out the same individual trait in its most exaggerated state; and the force of his impassioned characters arises for the most part, from the obstinacy with which they exclude every other feeling. Their vices look of a gigantic stature from their standing alone. Their actions seem extravagant from their having always the same fixed aim—the same incorrigible purpose. The fault of Sir Giles Overreach, in this respect, is less in the excess to which he pushes a favourite propensity, than in the circumstance of its being unmixed with any other virtue or vice.

'We may find the same simplicity of dramatic conception in the comic as in the tragic characters of the author. Justice Greedy has but one idea or subject in his head throughout. He is always eating, or talking of eating. His belly is always in his mouth, and we know nothing of him but his appetite; he is as sharpset as travellers from off a journey. His land of promise touches on the borders of the wilderness: his thoughts are constantly in apprehension of feasting or famishing. A fat turkey floats before his imagination in royal state, and his hunger sees visions of chines of beef, venison pasties, and Norfolk dumplings, as if it were seized with a calenture. He is a very amusing personage; and in what relates to eating and drinking, as peremptory as Sir Giles himself.—Marrall is another instance of confined comic humour, whose ideas never wander beyond the ambition of being the implicit drudge of another's knavery or good fortune. He sticks to his stewardship, and resists the favour of a salute from a fine lady as not entered in his accounts. The humour of this character is less striking in the play than in Munden's personification of it. The other characters do not require any particular analysis. They are very insipid, good sort of people.'

division of some of the lines into hemistichs, &c. so as to make in one case a mathematical stair-case of the words and answers given to different speakers,[1] is an instance of frigid and ridiculous pedantry. An artificial elaborateness is the general characteristic of Ford's style. In this respect his plays resemble Miss Baillie's more than any others I am acquainted with, and are quite distinct from the exuberance and unstudied force which characterised his immediate predecessors. There is too much of scholastic subtlety, an innate perversity of understanding or predominance of will, which either seeks the irritation of inadmissible subjects, or to stimulate its own faculties by taking the most barren, and making something out of nothing, in a spirit of contradiction. He does not *draw along with* the reader: he does not work upon our sympathy, but on our antipathy or our indifference; and there is as little of the social or gregarious principle in his productions as there appears to have been in his personal habits, if we are to believe Sir John Suckling, who says of him in the Sessions of the Poets—

> 'In the dumps John Ford alone by himself sat
> With folded arms and melancholy hat.'

I do not remember without considerable effort the plot or persons of most of his plays—Perkin Warbeck, The Lover's Melancholy, Love's Sacrifice, and the rest. There is little character, except of the most evanescent or extravagant kind (to which last class we may refer that of the sister of Calantha in the Broken Heart)—little imagery or fancy, and no action. It is but fair however to give a scene or two, in illustration of these remarks (or in confutation of them, if they are wrong) and I shall take the concluding one of the Broken Heart, which is held up as the author's master-piece.

'SCENE—*A Room in the Palace.*

Loud Music.—Enter Euphranea, *led by* Groneas *and* Hemophil: Prophilus, *led by* Christalla *and* Philema: Nearchus *supporting* Calantha, Crotolon, *and* Amelus.—(*Music ceases*).

Cal. We miss our servants, Ithocles and Orgilus; on whom attend they?

Crot. My son, gracious princess,
Whisper'd some new device, to which these revels

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[1] '*Ithocles.* Soft peace enrich this room.
Orgilus. How fares the lady?
Philema. Dead!
Christalla. Dead!
Philema. Starv'd!
Christalla. Starv'd!
Ithocles. Me miserable!'

Should be but usher: wherein I conceive
Lord Ithocles and he himself are actors.
Cal. A fair excuse for absence. As for Bassanes,
Delights to him are troublesome. Armostes
Is with the king?
Crot. He is.
Cal. On to the dance!
Dear cousin, hand you the bride: the bridegroom must be
Entrusted to my courtship. Be not jealous,
Euphranea; I shall scarcely prove a temptress.
Fall to our dance!

(*They dance the first change, during which enter* Armostes).

Arm. (*in a whisper to* Calantha). The king your father's dead.
Cal. To the other change.
Arm. Is 't possible?

Another Dance.—Enter Bassanes.

Bass. (*in a whisper to* Calantha). Oh! Madam,
Panthea, poor Panthea's starv'd.
Cal. Beshrew thee!
Lead to the next!
Bass. Amazement dulls my senses.

Another Dance.—Enter Orgilus.

Org. Brave Ithocles is murder'd, murder'd cruelly.
(*Aside to* Calantha).
Cal. How dull this music sounds! Strike up more sprightly:
Our footings are not active like our heart,[1]
Which treads the nimbler measure.
Org. I am thunderstruck.

The last Change.—Music ceases.

Cal. So; Let us breathe awhile. Hath not this motion
Rais'd fresher colours on our cheek?
Near. Sweet princess,
A perfect purity of blood enamels
The beauty of your white.
Cal. We all look cheerfully:
And, cousin, 'tis methinks a rare presumption
In any who prefers our lawful pleasures
Before their own sour censure, to interrupt
The custom of this ceremony bluntly.
Near. None dares, lady.
Cal. Yes, yes; some hollow voice deliver'd to me
How that the king was dead.
Arm. The king is dead,' &c. &c.

[1] 'High as our heart.'—See passage from the Malcontent.

This, I confess, appears to me to be tragedy in masquerade. Nor is it, I think, accounted for, though it may be in part redeemed by her solemn address at the altar to the dead body of her husband.

'*Cal.* Forgive me. Now I turn to thee, thou shadow
Of my contracted lord! Bear witness all,
I put my mother's wedding-ring upon
His finger; 'twas my father's last bequest:
(*Places a ring on the finger of* Ithocles).
Thus I new marry him, whose wife I am:
Death shall not separate us. Oh, my lords,
I but deceiv'd your eyes with antic gesture,
When one news strait came huddling on another
Of death, and death, and death: still I danc'd forward;
But it struck home and here, and in an instant.
Be such mere women, who with shrieks and outcries
Can vow a present end to all their sorrows,
Yet live to vow new pleasures, and outlive them.
They are the silent griefs which cut the heartstrings:
Let me die smiling.
Near. 'Tis a truth too ominous.
Cal. One kiss on these cold lips—my last: crack, crack:
Argos, now Sparta's king, command the voices
Which wait at th' altar, now to sing the song
I fitted for my end.'

And then, after the song, she dies.

This is the true false gallop of sentiment: any thing more artificial and mechanical I cannot conceive. The boldness of the attempt, however, the very extravagance, might argue the reliance of the author on the truth of feeling prompting him to hazard it; but the whole scene is a forced transposition of that already alluded to in Marston's Malcontent. Even the form of the stage directions is the same.

'*Enter* Mendozo *supporting the* Duchess; Guerrino; *the Ladies that are on the stage rise.* Ferrardo *ushers in the* Duchess; *then takes a Lady to tread a measure.*

Aurelia. We will dance: music: we will dance. . . .

Enter Prepasso.

Who saw the Duke? the Duke?
Aurelia. Music.
Prepasso. The Duke? is the Duke returned?
Aurelia. Music.

Enter Celso.

The Duke is quite invisible, or else is not.

Aurelia. We are not pleased with your intrusion upon our private retirement; we are not pleased: you have forgot yourselves.

Enter a Page.

Celso. Boy, thy master? where 's the Duke?

Page. Alas, I left him burying the earth with his spread joyless limbs; he told me he was heavy, would sleep: bid me walk off, for the strength of fantasy oft made him talk in his dreams: I strait obeyed, nor ever saw him since; but wheresoe'er he is, he 's sad.

Aurelia. Music, sound high, as in our heart; sound high.

Enter Malevole *and her Husband, disguised like a Hermit.*

Malevole. The Duke? Peace, the Duke is dead.

Aurelia. Music!' *Act IV. Scene* 3.

The passage in Ford appears to me an ill-judged copy from this. That a woman should call for music, and dance on in spite of the death of her husband whom she hates, without regard to common decency, is but too possible: that she should dance on with the same heroic perseverance in spite of the death of her husband, of her father, and of every one else whom she loves, from regard to common courtesy or appearance, is not surely natural. The passions may silence the voice of humanity, but it is, I think, equally against probability and decorum to make both the passions and the voice of humanity give way (as in the example of Calantha) to a mere form of outward behaviour. Such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontroulable feelings can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose, which is not the case in Ford's play; or it must be done for the effect and *eclat* of the thing, which is not fortitude but affectation. Mr. Lamb in his impressive eulogy on this passage in the Broken Heart has failed (as far as I can judge) in establishing the parallel between this uncalled-for exhibition of stoicism, and the story of the Spartan Boy.

It may be proper to remark here, that most of the great men of the period I have treated of (except the greatest of all, and one other) were men of classical education. They were learned men in an unlettered age; not self-taught men in a literary and critical age. This circumstance should be taken into the account in a theory of the dramatic genius of that age. Except Shakespear, nearly all of them, indeed, came up from Oxford or Cambridge, and immediately began to write for the stage. No wonder. The first coming up to London in those days must have had a singular effect upon a young man of genius, almost like visiting Babylon or Susa, or a journey to the other world. The stage (even as it then was), after the

recluseness and austerity of a college-life, must have appeared like Armida's enchanted palace, and its gay votaries like

> 'Fairy elves beyond the Indian mount,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest-side
> Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees; while overhead the moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
> Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
> Intent, with jocund music charm his ear:
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.'

So our young novices must have felt when they first saw the magic of the scene, and heard its syren sounds with rustic wonder, and the scholar's pride: and the joy that streamed from their eyes at that fantastic vision, at that gaudy shadow of life, of all its business and all its pleasures, and kindled their enthusiasm to join the mimic throng, still has left a long lingering glory behind it; and though now 'deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue,' lives in their eloquent page, 'informed with music, sentiment, and thought, never to die!'

LECTURE V

ON SINGLE PLAYS, POEMS, ETC., THE FOUR P'S, THE RETURN FROM PARNASSUS, GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE, AND OTHER WORKS.

I SHALL, in this Lecture, turn back to give some account of single plays, poems, etc.; the authors of which are either not known or not very eminent, and the productions themselves, in general, more remarkable for their singularity, or as specimens of the style and manners of the age, than for their intrinsic merit or poetical excellence. There are many more works of this kind, however, remaining, than I can pretend to give an account of; and what I shall chiefly aim at, will be, to excite the curiosity of the reader, rather than to satisfy it.

The FOUR P's is an interlude, or comic dialogue, in verse, between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Poticary, and a Pedlar, in which each exposes the tricks of his own and his neighbours' profession, with much humour and shrewdness. It was written by John Heywood, the Epigrammatist, who flourished chiefly in the reign of Henry VIII., was the intimate friend of Sir Thomas More, with whom he seems to have had a congenial spirit, and died abroad, in consequence of his

devotion to the Roman Catholic cause, about the year 1565. His zeal, however, on this head, does not seem to have blinded his judgment, or to have prevented him from using the utmost freedom and severity in lashing the abuses of Popery, at which he seems to have looked 'with the malice of a friend.' The Four P's bears the date of 1547. It is very curious, as an evidence both of the wit, the manners, and opinions of the time. Each of the parties in the dialogue gives an account of the boasted advantages of his own particular calling, that is, of the frauds which he practises on credulity and ignorance, and is laughed at by the others in turn. In fact, they all of them strive to outbrave each other, till the contest becomes a jest, and it ends in a wager, who shall tell the greatest lie? when the prize is adjudged to him, who says, that he had found a patient woman.[1] The common superstitions (here recorded) in civil and religious matters, are almost incredible; and the chopped logic, which was the fashion of the time, and which comes in aid of the author's shrewd and pleasant sallies to expose them, is highly entertaining. Thus the Pardoner, scorning the Palmer's long pilgrimages and circuitous route to Heaven, flouts him to his face, and vaunts his own superior pretensions.

'*Pard.* By the first part of this last tale,
It seemeth you came of late from the ale:
For reason on your side so far doth fail,
That you leave reasoning, and begin to rail.
Wherein you forget your own part clearly,
For you be as untrue as I:
But in one point you are beyond me,
For you may lie by authority,
And all that have wandered so far,
That no man can be their controller.
And where you esteem your labour so much,
I say yet again, my pardons are such,
That if there were a thousand souls on a heap,
I would bring them all to heaven as good sheep,
As you have brought yourself on pilgrimage,
In the last quarter of your voyage,
Which is far a this side heaven, by God:
There your labour and pardon is odd.
With small cost without any pain,
These pardons bring them to heaven plain:
Give me but a penny or two-pence,
And as soon as the soul departeth hence,
In half an hour, or three-quarters at the most,
The soul is in heaven with the Holy Ghost.'

[1] Or never known one otherwise than patient.

The Poticary does not approve of this arrogance of the Friar, and undertakes, in mood and figure, to prove them both 'false knaves.' It is he, he says, who sends most souls to heaven, and who ought, therefore, to have the credit of it.

> 'No soul, ye know, entereth heaven-gate,
> 'Till from the body he be separate:
> And whom have ye known die honestly,
> Without help of the Poticary?
> Nay, all that cometh to our handling,
> Except ye hap to come to hanging. . . . .
> Since of our souls the multitude
> I send to heaven, when all is view'd
> Who should but I then altogether
> Have thank of all their coming thither?'

The Pardoner here interrupts him captiously—

> 'If ye kill'd a thousand in an hour's space,
> When come they to heaven, dying out of grace?'

But the Poticary not so baffled, retorts—

> 'If a thousand pardons about your necks were tied;
> When come they to heaven, if they never died?
> * * * * * *
> But when ye feel your conscience ready,
> I can send you to heaven very quickly.'

The Pedlar finds out the weak side of his new companions, and tells them very bluntly, on their referring their dispute to him, a piece of his mind.

> 'Now have I found one mastery,
> That ye can do indifferently;
> And it is neither selling nor buying,
> But even only very lying.'

At this game of imposture, the cunning dealer in pins and laces undertakes to judge their merits; and they accordingly set to work like regular graduates. The Pardoner takes the lead, with an account of the virtues of his relics; and here we may find a plentiful mixture of Popish superstition and indecency. The bigotry of any age is by no means a test of its piety, or even sincerity. Men seemed to make themselves amends for the enormity of their faith by levity of feeling, as well as by laxity of principle; and in the indifference or ridicule with which they treated the wilful absurdities and extravagances to which they hood-winked their understandings, almost resembled children playing at blindman's buff, who grope their way in the dark, and make blunders on purpose to laugh at their own idleness and

folly. The sort of mummery at which Popish bigotry used to play at the time when this old comedy was written, was not quite so harmless as blind-man's buff: what was sport to her, was death to others. She laughed at her own mockeries of common sense and true religion, and murdered while she laughed. The tragic farce was no longer to be borne, and it was partly put an end to. At present, though her eyes are blindfolded, her hands are tied fast behind her, like the false Duessa's. The sturdy genius of modern philosophy has got her in much the same situation that Count Fathom has the old woman that he lashes before him from the robbers' cave in the forest. In the following dialogue of this lively satire, the most sacred mysteries of the Catholic faith are mixed up with its idlest legends by old Heywood, who was a martyr to his religious zeal without the slightest sense of impropriety. The Pardoner cries out in one place (like a lusty Friar John, or a trusty Friar Onion)—

'Lo, here be pardons, half a dozen,
For ghostly riches they have no cousin;
And moreover, to me they bring
Sufficient succour for my living.
And here be relics of such a kind,
As in this world no man can find.
Kneel down all three, and when ye leave kissing,
Who list to offer shall have my blessing.
Friends, here shall ye see even anon,
Of All-Hallows the blessed jaw-bone.
Mark well this, this relic here is a whipper;
My friends unfeigned, here is a slipper
Of one of the seven sleepers, be sure.—
Here is an eye-tooth of the great Turk:
Whose eyes be once set on this piece of work,
May happily lose part of his eye-sight,
But not all till he be blind outright.
Kiss it hardly with good devotion.
Pot. This kiss shall bring us much promotion:
Fogh, by St. Saviour I never kiss'd a worse.
* * * * * *
For by All-Hallows, yet methinketh,
That All-Hallows' breath stinketh.
Palm. Ye judge All-Hallows' breath unknown:
If any breath stink, it is your own.
Pot. I know mine own breath from All-Hallows,
Or else it were time to kiss the gallows.
Pard. Nay, Sirs, here may ye see
The great toe of the Trinity;
Who to this toe any money voweth,
And once may roll it in his mouth,

All his life after I undertake,
He shall never be vex'd with the tooth-ache.
Pat. I pray you turn that relic about;
Either the Trinity had the gout;
Or else, because it is three toes in one,
God made it as much as three toes alone.
Pard. Well, let that pass, and look upon this:
Here is a relic that doth not miss
To help the least as well as the most:
This is a buttock-bone of Pentecost.

* * * * * *

Here is a box full of humble bees,
That stung Eve as she sat on her knees
Tasting the fruit to her forbidden:
Who kisseth the bees within this hidden,
Shall have as much pardon of right,
As for any relic he kiss'd this night . .
Good friends, I have yet here in this glass,
Which on the drink at the wedding was
Of Adam and Eve undoubtedly:
If ye honour this relic devoutly,
Although ye thirst no whit the less,
Yet shall ye drink the more, doubtless.
After which drinking, ye shall be as meet
To stand on your head as on your feet.'

The same sort of significant irony runs through the Apothecary's knavish enumeration of miraculous cures in his possession.

'For this medicine helpeth one and other,
And bringeth them in case that they need no other.
Here is a *syrapus de Byzantis*,
A little thing is enough of this;
For even the weight of one scrippal
Shall make you as strong as a cripple. . . .
These be the things that break all strife,
Between man's sickness and his life.
From all pain these shall you deliver,
And set you even at rest forever.
Here is a medicine no more like the same,
Which commonly is called thus by name. . . .
Not one thing here particularly,
But worketh universally;
For it doth me as much good when I sell it,
As all the buyers that take it or smell it.
If any reward may entreat ye,
I beseech your mastership be good to me,
And ye shall have a box of marmalade,
So fine that you may dig it with a spade.'

After these quaint but pointed examples of it, Swift's boast with respect to the invention of irony,

> 'Which I was born to introduce,
> Refin'd it first, and shew'd its use,'

can be allowed to be true only in part.

The controversy between them being undecided, the Apothecary, to clench his pretensions 'as a liar of the first magnitude,' by a *coup-de-grace*, says to the Pedlar, 'You are an honest man,' but this home-thrust is somehow ingeniously parried. The Apothecary and Pardoner fall to their narrative vein again; and the latter tells a story of fetching a young woman from the lower world, from which I shall only give one specimen more as an instance of ludicrous and fantastic exaggeration. By the help of a passport from Lucifer, 'given in the furnace of our palace,' he obtains a safe conduct from one of the subordinate imps to his master's presence.

> 'This devil and I walked arm in arm
> So far, 'till he had brought me thither,
> Where all the devils of hell together
> Stood in array in such apparel,
> As for that day there meetly fell.
> Their horns well gilt, their claws full clean,
> Their tails well kempt, and as I ween,
> With sothery butter their bodies anointed;
> I never saw devils so well appointed.
> The master-devil sat in his jacket,
> And all the souls were playing at racket.
> None other rackets they had in hand,
> Save every soul a good fire-brand;
> Wherewith they play'd so prettily,
> That Lucifer laugh'd merrily.
> And all the residue of the fiends
> Did laugh thereat full well like friends.
> But of my friend I saw no whit,
> Nor durst not ask for her as yet.
> Anon all this rout was brought in silence,
> And I by an usher brought to presence
> Of Lucifer; then low, as well I could,
> I kneeled, which he so well allow'd
> That thus he beck'd, and by St. Antony
> He smiled on me well-favour'dly,
> Bending his brows as broad as barn-doors;
> Shaking his ears as rugged as burrs;
> Rolling his eyes as round as two bushels;
> Flashing the fire out of his nostrils;

Gnashing his teeth so vain-gloriously,
That methought time to fall to flattery,
Wherewith I told, as I shall tell;
Oh pleasant picture! O prince of hell!' &c.

The piece concludes with some good wholesome advice from the Pedlar, who here, as well as in the poem of the Excursion, performs the part of Old Morality; but he does not seem, as in the latter case, to be acquainted wth the 'mighty stream of Tendency.' He is more 'full of wise saws than modern instances;' as prosing, but less paradoxical!

'But where ye doubt, the truth not knowing,
Believing the best, good may be growing.
In judging the best, no harm at the least:
In judging the worst, no good at the best.
But best in these things it seemeth to me,
To make no judgment upon ye;
But as the church does judge or take them,
So do ye receive or forsake them.
And so be you sure you cannot err,
But may be a fruitful follower.'

Nothing can be clearer than this.

The RETURN FROM PARNASSUS was 'first publicly acted,' as the title-page imports, 'by the Students in St. John's College, in Cambridge.' It is a very singular, a very ingenious, and as I think, a very interesting performance. It contains criticisms on contemporary authors, strictures on living manners, and the earliest denunciation (I know of) of the miseries and unprofitableness of a scholar's life. The only part I object to in our author's criticism is his abuse of Marston; and that, not because he says what is severe, but because he says what is not true of him. Anger may sharpen our insight into men's defects; but nothing should make us blind to their excellences. The whole passage is, however, so curious in itself (like the Edinburgh Review lately published for the year 1755) that I cannot forbear quoting a great part of it. We find in the list of candidates for praise many a name—

'That like a trumpet, makes the spirits dance:'

there are others that have long since sunk to the bottom of the stream of time, and no Humane Society of Antiquarians and Critics is ever likely to fish them up again.

'Read the names,' says Judicio.

'*Ingenioso.* So I will, if thou wilt help me to censure them.

Edmund Spenser,
Henry Constable,
Thomas Lodge,
Samuel Daniel,
Thomas Watson,
Michael Drayton,
John Davis,
John Marston,
Kit. Marlowe,
William Shakespear;' and one Churchyard [who is consigned to an untimely grave.]

'Good men and true, stand together, hear your censure: what's thy judgment of Spenser?

Jud. A sweeter swan than ever sung in Po;
A shriller nightingale than ever blest
The prouder groves of self-admiring Rome.
Blithe was each valley, and each shepherd proud,
While he did chaunt his rural minstrelsy.
Attentive was full many a dainty ear:
Nay, hearers hung upon his melting tongue,
While sweetly of his Faëry Queen he sung;
While to the water's fall he tuned her fame,
And in each bark engrav'd Eliza's name.
And yet for all, this unregarding soil
Unlaced the line of his desired life,
Denying maintenance for his dear relief;
Careless even to prevent his exequy,
Scarce deigning to shut up his dying eye.

Ing. Pity it is that gentler wits should breed,
Where thick-skinn'd chuffs laugh at a scholar's need.
But softly may our honour'd ashes rest,
That lie by merry Chaucer's noble chest.

But I pray thee proceed briefly in thy censure, that I may be proud of myself, as in the first, so in the last, my censure may jump with thine. Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Watson.

Jud. Sweet Constable doth take the wondering ear,
And lays it up in willing prisonment:
Sweet honey-dropping Daniel doth wage
War with the proudest big Italian,
That melts his heart in sugar'd sonnetting.
Only let him more sparingly make use
Of others' wit, and use his own the more,
That well may scorn base imitation.
For Lodge and Watson, men of some desert,
Yet subject to a critic's marginal:
Lodge for his oar in every paper boat,
He that turns over Galen every day,
To sit and simper Euphues' legacy.

Ing. Michael Drayton.

Jud. Drayton's sweet Muse is like a sanguine dye,
Able to ravish the rash gazer's eye.

Ing. However, he wants one true note of a poet of our times; and that is this, he cannot swagger in a tavern, nor domineer in a hot-house. John Davis—

Jud. Acute John Davis, I affect thy rhymes,
That jerk in hidden charms these looser times:
Thy plainer verse, thy unaffected vein,
Is graced with a fair and sweeping train.

John Marston—

Jud. What, Monsieur Kinsayder, put up man, put up for shame,
Methinks he is a ruffian in his style,
Withouten bands or garters' ornament.
He quaffs a cup of Frenchman's helicon,
Then royster doyster in his oily terms
Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomsoe'er he meets,
And strews about Ram-alley meditations.
Tut, what cares he for modest close-couch'd terms,
Cleanly to gird our looser libertines?
Give him plain naked words stript from their shirts,
That might beseem plain-dealing Aretine.

Ing. Christopher Marlowe—

Jud. Marlowe was happy in his buskin'd Muse;
Alas! unhappy in his life and end.
Pity it is that wit so ill should dwell,
Wit lent from heaven, but vices sent from hell.

Ing. Our theatre hath lost, Pluto hath got
A tragic penman for a dreary plot.

Benjamin Jonson.

Jud. The wittiest fellow of a bricklayer in England.

Ing. A mere empirick, one that gets what he hath by observation, and makes only nature privy to what he endites: so slow an inventor, that he were better betake himself to his old trade of bricklaying, a blood whoreson, as confident now in making of a book, as he was in times past in laying of a brick.

William Shakespear.

Jud. Who loves Adonis' love, or Lucrece' rape,
His sweeter verse contains heart-robbing life,
Could but a graver subject him content,
Without love's lazy foolish languishment.'

This passage might seem to ascertain the date of the piece, as it must be supposed to have been written before Shakespeare had become known as a dramatic poet. Yet he afterwards introduces Kempe the actor talking with Burbage, and saying, 'Few (of the University) pen plays well: they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and of that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why here's our fellow Shakespear puts them all down; aye, and Ben Jonson too.'—There is a good deal

of discontent in all this; but the author complains of want of success in a former attempt, and appears not to have been on good terms with fortune. The miseries of a poet's life form one of the favourite topics of The Return from Parnassus, and are treated, as if by some one who had 'felt them knowingly.' Thus Philomusus and Studioso chaunt their griefs in concert.

'*Phil.* Bann'd be those hours, when 'mongst the learned throng,
By Granta's muddy bank we whilom sung.
Stud. Bann'd be that hill which learned wits adore,
Where erst we spent our stock and little store.
Phil. Bann'd be those musty mews, where we have spent
Our youthful days in paled languishment.
Stud. Bann'd be those cozening arts that wrought our woe,
Making us wandering pilgrims to and fro . . .
Phil. Curst be our thoughts whene'er they dream of hope;
Bann'd be those haps that henceforth flatter us,
When mischief dogs us still, and still for aye,
From our first birth until our burying day.
In our first gamesome age, our doting sires
Carked and car'd to have us lettered:
Sent us to Cambridge where our oil is spent:
Us our kind college from the teat did tent,
And forced us walk before we weaned were.
From that time since wandered have we still
In the wide world, urg'd by our forced will;
Nor ever have we happy fortune tried;
Then why should hope with our rent state abide?'

'Out of our proof we speak.'—This sorry matter-of-fact retrospect of the evils of a college-life is very different from the hypothetical aspirations after its incommunicable blessings expressed by a living writer of true genius and a lover of true learning, who does not seem to have been cured of the old-fashioned prejudice in favour of classic lore, two hundred years after its vanity and vexation of spirit had been denounced in the Return from Parnassus:

'I was not train'd in Academic bowers;
And to those learned streams I nothing owe,
Which copious from those fair twin founts do flow:
Mine have been any thing but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap.
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap;
And I walk gowned; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech;
Old Ramus' ghost is busy at my brain,

> And my skull teems with notions infinite:
> Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
> Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's vein;
> And half had stagger'd that stout Stagyrite.[1]

Thus it is that our treasure always lies, where our knowledge does not; and fortunately enough perhaps; for the empire of imagination is wider and more prolific than that of experience.

The author of the old play, whoever he was, appears to have belonged to that class of mortals, who, as Fielding has it, feed upon their own hearts; who are egotists the wrong way, 'made desperate by too quick a sense of constant infelicity;' and have the same intense uneasy consciousness of their own defects that most men have self-complacency in their supposed advantages. Thus venting the dribblets of his spleen still upon himself, he prompts the Page to say, 'A mere scholar is a creature that can strike fire in the morning at his tinder-box, put on a pair of lined slippers, sit reuming till dinner, and then go to his meat when the bell rings; one that hath a peculiar gift in a cough, and a licence to spit: or if you will have him defined by negatives, he is one that cannot make a good leg, one that cannot eat a mess of broth cleanly, one that cannot ride a horse without spur-galling, one that cannot salute a woman, and look on her directly, one that cannot——'

If I was not afraid of being tedious, I might here give the examination of Signor Immerito, a raw ignorant clown (whose father has purchased him a living) by Sir Roderick and the Recorder, which throws considerable light on the state of wit and humour, as well as of ecclesiastical patronage in the reign of Elizabeth. It is to be recollected, that one of the titles of this play is A Scourge for Simony.

'*Rec.* For as much as nature has done her part in making you a handsome likely man—in the next place some art is requisite for the perfection of nature: for the trial whereof, at the request of my worshipful friend, I will in some sort propound questions fit to be resolved by one of your profession. Say what is a person, that was never at the university?

Im. A person that was never in the university, is a living creature that can eat a tythe pig.

Rec. Very well answered: but you should have added—and must be officious to his patron. Write down that answer, to shew his learning in logic.

Sir Rad. Yea, boy, write that down: very learnedly, in good faith. I pray now let me ask you one question that I remember, whether is the masculine gender or the feminine more worthy?

[1] Sonnet to Cambridge, by Charles Lamb.

Im. The feminine, Sir.

Sir Rad. The right answer, the right answer. In good faith, I have been of that mind always: write, boy, that, to shew he is a grammarian.

Rec. What university are you of?

Im. Of none.

Sir Rad. He tells truth: to tell truth is an excellent virtue: boy, make two heads, one for his learning, another for his virtues, and refer this to the head of his virtues, not of his learning. Now, Master Recorder, if it please you, I will examine him in an author, that will sound him to the depth; a book of astronomy, otherwise called an almanack.

Rec. Very good, Sir Roderick; it were to be wished there were no other book of humanity; then there would not be such busy state-prying fellows as are now a-days. Proceed, good Sir.

Sir Rad. What is the dominical letter?

Im. C, Sir, and please your worship.

Sir Rad. A very good answer, a very good answer, the very answer of the book. Write down that, and refer it to his skill in philosophy. How many days hath September?

Im. Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, February hath twenty-eight alone, and all the rest hath thirty and one.

Sir Rad. Very learnedly, in good faith: he hath also a smack in poetry. Write down that, boy, to shew his learning in poetry. How many miles from Waltham to London?

Im. Twelve, Sir.

Sir Rad. How many from New Market to Grantham?

Im. Ten, Sir.

Sir Rad. Write down that answer of his, to shew his learning in arithmetic.

Page. He must needs be a good arithmetician that counted [out] money so lately.

Sir Rad. When is the new moon?

Im. The last quarter, the 5th day, at two of the clock, and thirty-eight minutes in the morning.

Sir Rad. How call you him that is weather-wise?

Rec. A good astronomer.

Sir Rad. Sirrah, boy, write him down for a good astronomer. What day of the month lights the queen's day on?

Im. The 17th of November.

Sir Rad. Boy, refer this to his virtues, and write him down a good subject.

Page. Faith, he were an excellent subject for two or three good wits: he would make a fine ass for an ape to ride upon.

Sir Rad. And these shall suffice for the parts of his learning. Now it remains to try, whether you be a man of a good utterance, that is, whether you can ask for the strayed heifer with the white face, as also chide the boys in the belfry, and bid the sexton whip out the dogs: let me hear your voice.

Im. If any man or woman—

Sir Rad. That 's too high.

Im. If any man or woman—

Sir Rad. That 's too low.

Im. If any man or woman can tell any tidings of a horse with four feet, two ears, that did stray about the seventh hour, three minutes in the forenoon, the fifth day—

Sir Rad. Boy, write him down for a good utterance. Master Recorder, I think he hath been examined sufficiently.

Rec. Aye, Sir Roderick, 'tis so: we have tried him very thoroughly.

Page. Aye, we have taken an inventory of his good parts, and prized them accordingly.

Sir Rad. Signior Immerito, forasmuch as we have made a double trial of thee, the one of your learning, the other of your erudition; it is expedient, also, in the next place, to give you a few exhortations, considering the greatest clerks are not the wisest men: this is therefore first to exhort you to abstain from controversies; secondly, not to gird at men of worship, such as myself, but to use yourself discreetly; thirdly, not to speak when any man or woman coughs: do so, and in so doing, I will persevere to be your worshipful friend and loving patron. Lead Immerito in to my son, and let him dispatch him, and remember my tythes to be reserved, paying twelve-pence a-year.'

Gammer Gurton's Needle[1] is a still older and more curious relic; and is a regular comedy in five acts, built on the circumstance of an old woman having lost her needle, which throws the whole village into confusion, till it is at last providentially found sticking in an unlucky part of Hodge's dress. This must evidently have happened at a time when the manufacturers of Sheffield and Birmingham had not reached the height of perfection which they have at present done. Suppose that there is only one sewing-needle in a parish, that the owner, a diligent notable old dame, loses it, that a mischief-making wag sets it about that another old woman has stolen this valuable instrument of household industry, that strict search is made every where in-doors for it in vain, and that then the incensed parties sally forth to scold it out in the open air, till words end in blows, and the affair is referred over to the higher authorities, and we shall have an exact idea (though perhaps not so lively a one) of what passes in this authentic document between Gammer Gurton and her Gossip Dame Chat, Dickon the Bedlam (the causer of these harms), Hodge, Gammer Gurton's servant, Tyb her maid, Cocke, her 'prentice boy, Doll, Scapethrift, Master Baillie his master, Doctor Rat, the Curate, and Gib the Cat, who may be fairly reckoned one of the *dramatis personæ*, and performs no mean part.

[1] The name of Still has been assigned as the author of this singular production, with the date of 1566.

'Gog's crosse, Gammer' (says Cocke the boy), 'if ye will laugh, look in but at the door,
And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing amidst the floor,
Raking there, some fire to find among the ashes dead'
[That is, to light a candle to look for the lost needle],
'Where there is not a spark so big as a pin's head:
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees,
Which were indeed nought else but Gib our cat's two eyes.
Puff, quoth Hodge; thinking thereby to have fire without doubt;
With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out;
And by and by them open'd, even as they were before,
With that the sparks appeared, even as they had done of yore:
And even as Hodge blew the fire, as he did think,
Gib, as he felt the blast, strait way began to wink;
Till Hodge fell of swearing, as came best to his turn;
The fire was sure bewitch'd, and therefore would not burn.
At last Gib up the stairs, among old posts and pins,
And Hodge he hied him after, till broke were both his shins;
Cursing and swearing oaths, were never of his making,
That Gib would fire the house, if that she were not taken.'

Diccon the strolling beggar (or Bedlam, as he is called) steals a piece of bacon from behind Gammer Gurton's door, and in answer to Hodge's complaint of being dreadfully pinched for hunger, asks—

'Why Hodge, was there none at home thy dinner for to set?
Hodge. Gog's bread, Diccon, I came too late, was nothing there to get:
Gib (a foul fiend might on her light) lick'd the milk-pan so clean:
See Diccon, 'twas not so well wash'd this seven year, I ween.
A pestilence light on all ill luck, I had thought yet for all this,
Of a morsel of bacon behind the door, at worst I should not miss:
But when I sought a slip to cut, as I was wont to do,
Gog's souls, Diccon, Gib our cat had eat the bacon too.'

Hodge's difficulty in making Diccon understand what the needle is which his dame has lost, shows his superior acquaintance with the conveniences and modes of abridging labour in more civilised life, of which the other had no idea.

'*Hodge.* Has she not gone, trowest now thou, and lost her neele?' [So it is called here.]
'*Dic.* (*says staring*). Her eel, Hodge! Who fished of late? That was a dainty dish.
Hodge. Tush, tush, her neele, her neele, her neele, man, 'tis neither flesh nor fish:
A little thing with a hole in the end, as bright as any siller [silver],
Small, long, sharp at the point, and strait as any pillar.
Dic. I know not what a devil thou meanest, thou bring'st me more in doubt.

Hodge. (*answers with disdain*). Know'st not with what Tom tailor's man sits broching through a clout ?
A neele, a neele, my Gammer's neele is gone.'

The rogue Diccon threatens to shew Hodge a spirit; but though Hodge runs away through pure fear before it has time to appear, he does not fail, in the true spirit of credulity, to give a faithful and alarming account of what he did not see to his mistress, concluding with a hit at the Popish Clergy.

'By the mass, I saw him of late call up a great black devil.
Oh, the knave cried, ho, ho, he roared and he thunder'd;
And ye had been there, I am sure you 'd murrainly ha' wonder'd.
Gam. Wast not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in his place ?
Hodge (*lies and says*). No, and he had come to me, should have laid him on his face,
Should have promised him.
Gam. But, Hodge, had he no horns to push ?
Hodge. As long as your two arms. Saw ye never Friar Rush,
Painted on a cloth, with a fine long cow's tail,
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked nail ?
For all the world (if I should judge) should reckon him his brother:
Look even what face Friar Rush had, the devil had such another.'

He then adds (quite apocryphally) while he is in for it, that 'the devil said plainly that Dame Chat had got the needle,' which makes all the disturbance. The same play contains the well-known good old song, beginning and ending—

'Back and side, go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.
I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think, that I can drink
With him that wears a hood:
Though I go bare, take ye no care;
I nothing am a-cold:
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.

I love no roast, but a nut-brown toast,
And a crab laid in the fire:
A little bread shall do me stead,
Much bread I not desire.
No frost nor snow, no wind I trow,

Can hurt me if I wolde,
I am so wrapt and thoroughly lapt
In jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.

And Tib, my wife, that as her life
Loveth well good ale to seek;
Full oft drinks she, till ye may see
The tears run down her cheek:
Then doth she troll to me the bowl,
Even as a malt-worm sholde:
And saith, sweetheart, I took my part
Of this jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.

Such was the wit, such was the mirth of our ancestors:—homely, but hearty; coarse perhaps, but kindly. Let no man despise it, for 'Evil to him that evil thinks.' To think it poor and beneath notice because it is not just like ours, is the same sort of hypercriticism that was exercised by the person who refused to read some old books, because they were 'such very poor spelling.' The meagreness of their literary or their bodily fare was at least relished by themselves; and this is better than a surfeit or an indigestion. It is refreshing to look out of ourselves sometimes, not to be always holding the glass to our own peerless perfections: and as there is a dead wall which always intercepts the prospect of the future from our view (all that we can see beyond it is the heavens), it is as well to direct our eyes now and then without scorn to the page of history, and repulsed in our attempts to penetrate the secrets of the next six thousand years, not to turn our backs on old long syne!

The other detached plays of nearly the same period of which I proposed to give a cursory account, are Green's Tu Quoque, Microcosmus, Lingua, The Merry Devil of Edmonton, The Pinner of Wakefield, and the Spanish Tragedy. Of the spurious plays attributed to Shakespear, and to be found in the editions of his works, such as the Yorkshire Tragedy, Sir John Oldcastle, The Widow of Watling Street, &c. I shall say nothing here, because I suppose the reader to be already acquainted with them, and because I have given a general account of them in another work.

Green's Tu Quoque, by George Cook, a contemporary of Shakespear's, is so called from Green the actor, who played the part of Bubble in this very lively and elegant comedy, with the cant

phrase of *Tu Quoque* perpetually in his mouth. The double change of situation between this fellow and his master, Staines, each passing from poverty to wealth, and from wealth to poverty again, is equally well imagined and executed. A gay and gallant spirit pervades the whole of it; wit, poetry, and morality, each take their turn in it. The characters of the two sisters, Joyce and Gertrude, are very skilfully contrasted, and the manner in which they mutually betray one another into the hands of their lovers, first in the spirit of mischief, and afterwards of retaliation, is quite dramatic. 'If you cannot find in your heart to tell him you love him, I 'll sigh it out for you. Come, we little creatures must help one another,' says the Madcap to the Madonna. As to style and matter, this play has a number of pigeon-holes full of wit and epigrams which are flying out in almost every sentence. I could give twenty pointed conceits, wrapped up in good set terms. Let one or two at the utmost suffice. A bad hand at cards is thus described. Will Rash says to Scattergood, 'Thou hast a wild hand indeed: thy small cards shew like a troop of rebels, and the knave of clubs their chief leader.' Bubble expresses a truism very gaily on finding himself equipped like a gallant—'How apparel makes a man respected! The very children in the street do adore me.' We find here the first mention of Sir John Suckling's 'melancholy hat,' as a common article of wear—the same which he chose to clap on Ford's head, and the first instance of the theatrical *double entendre* which has been repeated ever since of an actor's ironically abusing himself in his feigned character.

'*Gervase.* They say Green 's a good clown.
Bubble. (*Played by Green, says*) Green! Green 's an ass.
Scattergood. Wherefore do you say so?
Bub. Indeed, I ha' no reason; for they say he 's as like me as ever he can look.'

The following description of the dissipation of a fortune in the hands of a spendthrift is ingenious and beautiful.

'Know that which made him gracious in your eyes,
And gilded o'er his imperfections,
Is wasted and consumed even like ice,
Which by the vehemence of heat dissolves,
And glides to many rivers: so his wealth,
That felt a prodigal hand, hot in expence,
Melted within his gripe, and from his coffers
Ran like a violent stream to other men's.'

Microcosmus, by Thomas Nabbes, is a dramatic mask or allegory, in which the Senses, the Soul, a Good and a Bad Genius,

Conscience, &c. contend for the dominion of a man; and notwithstanding the awkwardness of the machinery, is not without poetry, elegance, and originality. Take the description of morning as a proof.

> 'What do I see? Blush, grey-eyed morn and spread
> Thy purple shame upon the mountain tops:
> Or pale thyself with envy, since here comes
> A brighter Venus than the dull-eyed star
> That lights thee up.'

But what are we to think of a play, of which the following is a literal list of the *dramatis personæ*?

'NATURE, a fair woman, in a white robe, wrought with birds, beasts, fruits, flowers, clouds, stars, &c.; on her head a wreath of flowers interwoven with stars.

JANUS, a man with two faces, signifying Providence, in a yellow robe, wrought with snakes, as he is *deus anni*: on his head a crown. He is Nature's husband.

FIRE, a fierce-countenanced young man, in a flame-coloured robe, wrought with gleams of fire; his hair red, and on his head a crown of flames. His creature a Vulcan.

AIR, a young man of a variable countenance, in a blue robe; wrought with divers-coloured clouds; his hair blue; and on his head a wreath of clouds. His creature a giant or silvan.

WATER, a young woman in a sea-green robe, wrought with waves; her hair a sea-green, and on her head a wreath of sedge bound about with waves. Her creature a syren.

EARTH, a young woman of a sad countenance, in a grass-green robe, wrought with sundry fruits and flowers; her hair black, and on her head a chaplet of flowers. Her creature a pigmy.

LOVE, a Cupid in a flame-coloured habit; bow and quiver, a crown of flaming hearts &c.

PHYSANDER, a perfect grown man, in a long white robe, and on his head a garland of white lilies and roses mixed. His name *ἀπο τῆς φύσεος καὶ τῶ ἀνδρος*.

CHOLER, a fencer; his clothes red.

BLOOD, a dancer, in a watchet-coloured suit.

PHLEGM, a physician, an old man; his doublet white and black; trunk hose.

MELANCHOLY, a musician: his complexion, hair, and clothes, black; a lute in his hand. He is likewise an amorist.

BELLANIMA, a lovely woman, in a long white robe; on her head a wreath of white flowers. She signifies the soul.

BONUS GENIUS, an angel, in a like white robe; wings and wreath white.

MALUS GENIUS, a devil, in a black robe; hair, wreath, and wings, black.

The Five Senses—SEEING, a chambermaid; HEARING, the usher of the hall; SMELLING, a huntsman or gardener; TASTING, a cook; TOUCHING, a gentleman usher.

SENSUALITY, a wanton woman, richly habited, but lasciviously dressed, &c.

TEMPERANCE, a lovely woman, of a modest countenance; her garments plain, but decent, &c.

A Philosopher,
An Eremite,
A Ploughman,
A Shepherd,
} all properly habited.

Three Furies as they are commonly fancied.

FEAR, the Crier of the Court, with a tipstaff.

CONSCIENCE, the Judge of the Court.

HOPE and DESPAIR, an advocate and a lawyer.

The other three Virtues, as they are frequently expressed by painters.

The Heroes, in bright antique habits, &c.

The front of a workmanship, proper to the fancy of the rest, adorned with brass figures of angels and devils, with several inscriptions; the title is an escutcheon, supported by an Angel and a Devil. Within the arch a continuing perspective of ruins, which is drawn still before the other scenes, whilst they are varied.

THE INSCRIPTIONS.

Hinc gloria. *Hinc pæna.*
Appetitus boni. *Appetitus Mali.*'

Antony Brewer's Lingua (1607) is of the same cast. It is much longer as well as older than Microcosmus. It is also an allegory celebrating the contention of the Five Senses for the crown of superiority, and the pretensions of Lingua or the Tongue to be admitted as a sixth sense. It is full of child's play, and old wives' tales; but is not unadorned with passages displaying strong good sense, and powers of fantastic description.

Mr. Lamb has quoted two passages from it—the admirable enumeration of the characteristics of different languages, 'The Chaldee wise, the Arabian physical,' &c.; and the striking description of the ornaments and uses of tragedy and comedy. The dialogue between Memory, Common Sense, and Phantastes, is curious and worth considering.

'*Common Sense.* Why, good father, why are you so late now-a-days?

Memory. Thus 'tis; the most customers I remember myself to have, are, as your lordship knows, scholars, and now-a-days the most of them are become critics, bringing me home such paltry things to lay up for them, that I can hardly find them again.

Phantastes. Jupiter, Jupiter, I had thought these flies had bit none but myself: do critics tickle you, i'faith?

Mem. Very familiarly: for they must know of me, forsooth, how every idle word is written in all the musty moth-eaten manuscripts, kept in all the old libraries in every city, betwixt England and Peru.

Common Sense. Indeed I have noted these times to affect antiquities more than is requisite.

Mem. I remember in the age of Assaracus and Ninus, and about the wars of Thebes, and the siege of Troy, there were few things committed to my charge, but those that were well worthy the preserving; but now every trifle must be wrapp'd up in the volume of eternity. A rich pudding-wife, or a cobbler, cannot die but I must immortalize his name with an epitaph; a dog cannot water in a nobleman's shoe, but it must be sprinkled into the chronicles; so that I never could remember my treasure more full, and never emptier of honourable and true heroical actions.'

And again Mendacio puts in his claim with great success to many works of uncommon merit.

'*Appe.* Thou, boy! how is this possible? Thou art but a child, and there were sects of philosophy before thou wert born.

Men. Appetitus, thou mistakest me; I tell thee three thousand years ago was Mendacio born in Greece, nursed in Crete, and ever since honoured every where: I 'll be sworn I held old Homer's pen when he writ his Iliads and his Odysseys.

Appe. Thou hadst need, for I hear say he was blind.

Men. I helped Herodotus to pen some part of his Muses; lent Pliny ink to write his history; rounded Rabelais in the ear when he historified Pantagruel; as for Lucian, I was his genius; O, those two books *de Vera Historia*, however they go under his name, I 'll be sworn I writ them every tittle.

Appe. Sure as I am hungry, thou 'lt have it for lying. But hast thou rusted this latter time for want of exercise?

Men. Nothing less. I must confess I would fain have jogged Stow and great Hollingshed on their elbows, when they were about their chronicles; and, as I remember, Sir John Mandevill's travels, and a great part of the Decad's, were of my doing: but for the Mirror of Knighthood, Bevis of Southampton, Palmerin of England, Amadis of Gaul, Huon de Bourdeaux, Sir Guy of Warwick, Martin Marprelate, Robin Hood, Garagantua, Gerilion, and a thousand such exquisite monuments as these, no doubt but they breathe in my breath up and down.'

The Merry Devil of Edmonton which has been sometimes attributed to Shakespear, is assuredly not unworthy of him. It is more likely, however, both from the style and subject-matter to have been Heywood's than any other person's. It is perhaps the first example of sentimental comedy we have—romantic, sweet, tender, it expresses the feelings of honour, of love, and friendship in their utmost delicacy, enthusiasm, and purity. The names alone, Raymond Mounchersey, Frank Jerningham, Clare, Millisent, 'sound silver sweet like lovers' tongues by night.' It sets out with a sort of story of Doctor Faustus, but this is dropt as jarring on the tender chords of the rest of the piece. The wit of the Merry Devil of Edmonton is as genuine as the poetry. Mine Host of the George is as good a fellow as Boniface, and the deer-stealing scenes in the forest between

him, Sir John the curate, Smug the smith, and Banks the miller, are 'very honest knaveries,' as Sir Hugh Evans has it. The air is delicate, and the deer, shot by their cross-bows, fall without a groan! Frank Jerningham says to Clare,

'The way lies right: hark, the clock strikes at Enfield: what 's the hour?
Young Clare. Ten, the bell says.
Jern. It was but eight when we set out from Cheston: Sir John and his sexton are at their ale to-night, the clock runs at random.
Y. Clare. Nay, as sure as thou livest, the villainous vicar is abroad in the chase. The priest steals more venison than half the country.
Jern. Millisent, how dost thou?
Mil. Sir, very well.
I would to God we were at Brian's lodge.'

A volume might be written to prove this last answer Shakespear's, in which the tongue says one thing in one line, and the heart contradicts it in the next; but there were other writers living in the time of Shakespear, who knew these subtle windings of the passions besides him,—though none so well as he!

The Pinner of Wakefield, or George a Greene, is a pleasant interlude, of an early date, and the author unknown, in which kings and coblers, outlaws and maid Marians are 'hail-fellow well met,' and in which the features of the antique world are made smiling and amiable enough. Jenkin, George a Greene's servant, is a notorious wag. Here is one of his pretended pranks.

Jenkin. This fellow comes to me,
And takes me by the bosom: you slave,
Said he, hold my horse, and look
He takes no cold in his feet.
No, marry shall he, Sir, quoth I,
I 'll lay my cloak underneath him.
I took my cloak, spread it all along,
And his horse on the midst of it.
George. Thou clown, did'st thou set his horse upon thy cloak?
Jenk. Aye, but mark how I served him.
Madge and he was no sooner gone down into the ditch
But I plucked out my knife, cut four holes in my cloak,
and made his horse stand on the bare ground.'

The first part of Jeronymo is an indifferent piece of work, and the second, or the Spanish Tragedy by Kyd, is like unto it, except the interpolations idly said to have been added by Ben Jonson, relating to Jeronymo's phrensy 'which have all the melancholy madness of poetry, if not the inspiration.'

ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, ETC.

LECTURE VI

ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, F. BEAUMONT, P. FLETCHER, DRAYTON, DANIEL, &c. SIR P. SIDNEY'S ARCADIA, AND OTHER WORKS.

I SHALL, in the present Lecture, attempt to give some idea of the lighter productions of the Muse in the period before us, in order to shew that grace and elegance are not confined entirely to later times, and shall conclude with some remarks on Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

I have already made mention of the lyrical pieces of Beaumont and Fletcher. It appears from his poems, that many of these were composed by Francis Beaumont, particularly the very beautiful ones in the tragedy of the False One, the Praise of Love in that of Valentinian, and another in the Nice Valour or Passionate Madman, an Address to Melancholy, which is the perfection of this kind of writing.

'Hence, all you vain delights;
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly:
There 's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see 't,
But only melancholy,
Oh, sweetest melancholy.
Welcome folded arms and fixed eyes,
A sight that piercing mortifies;
A look that 's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound;
Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves:
Moon-light walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a passing groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon:
Then stretch our bones in a still, gloomy valley;
Nothing so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.'

It has been supposed (and not without every appearance of good reason) that this pensive strain, 'most musical, most melancholy,' gave the first suggestion of the spirited introduction to Milton's Il Penseroso.

'Hence, vain deluding joys,
The brood of folly without father bred! . . . .

But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight, &c.'

The same writer thus moralises on the life of man, in a set of similes, as apposite as they are light and elegant.

'Like to the falling of a star,
Or as the flights of eagles are,
Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,
Or silver drops of morning dew,
Or like a wind that chafes the flood,
Or bubbles which on water stood:
Even such is man, whose borrow'd light
Is straight call'd in and paid to night:—
The wind blows out, the bubble dies;
The spring intomb'd in autumn lies;
The dew 's dried up, the star is shot,
The flight is past, and man forgot.'

'The silver foam which the wind severs from the parted wave' is not more light or sparkling than this: the dove's downy pinion is not softer and smoother than the verse. We are too ready to conceive of the poetry of that day, as altogether old-fashioned, meagre, squalid, deformed, withered and wild in its attire, or as a sort of uncouth monster, like 'grim-visaged comfortless despair,' mounted on a lumbering, unmanageable Pegasus, dragon-winged, and leaden-hoofed; but it as often wore a sylph-like form with Attic vest, with faery feet, and the butterfly's gaudy wings. The bees were said to have come, and built their hive in the mouth of Plato when a child; and the fable might be transferred to the sweeter accents of Beaumont and Fletcher! Beaumont died at the age of five and twenty. One of these writers makes Bellario the Page say to Philaster, who threatens to take his life—

——'Tis not a life;
'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away.'

But here was youth, genius, aspiring hope, growing reputation, cut off like a flower in its summer-pride, or like 'the lily on its stalk green,' which makes us repine at fortune and almost at nature, that seem to set so little store by their greatest favourites. The life of poets is or ought to be (judging of it from the light it lends to ours) a golden dream, full of brightness and sweetness, 'lapt in Elysium;' and it gives one a reluctant pang to see the splendid vision, by which they are attended in their path of glory, fade like

a vapour, and their sacred heads laid low in ashes, before the sand of common mortals has run out. Fletcher too was prematurely cut off by the plague. Raphael died at four and thirty, and Correggio at forty. Who can help wishing that they had lived to the age of Michael Angelo and Titian? Shakespear might have lived another half-century, enjoying fame and repose, 'now that his task was smoothly done,' listening to the music of his name, and better still, of his own thoughts, without minding Rymer's abuse of 'the tragedies of the last age.' His native stream of Avon would then have flowed with softer murmurs to the ear, and his pleasant birth-place, Stratford, would in that case have worn even a more gladsome smile than it does, to the eye of fancy!—Poets however have a sort of privileged after-life, which does not fall to the common lot: the rich and mighty are nothing but while they are living: their power ceases with them; but 'the sons of memory, the great heirs of fame' leave the best part of what was theirs, their thoughts, their verse, what they most delighted and prided themselves in, behind them—imperishable, incorruptible, immortal!—Sir John Beaumont (the brother of our dramatist) whose loyal and religious effusions are not worth much, very feelingly laments his brother's untimely death in an epitaph upon him.

> 'Thou should'st have followed me, but death to blame
> Miscounted years, and measured age by fame:
> So dearly hast thou bought thy precious lines,
> Their praise grew swiftly; so thy life declines.
> Thy Muse, the hearer's Queen, the reader's Love,
> All ears, all hearts (but Death's) could please and move.'

Beaumont's verses addressed to Ben Jonson at the Mermaid, are a pleasing record of their friendship, and of the way in which they 'fleeted the time carelessly' as well as studiously 'in the golden age' of our poetry.

[*Lines sent from the Country with two unfinished Comedies, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid.*]

> 'The sun which doth the greatest comfort bring
> To absent friends, because the self-same thing
> They know they see, however absent is,
> (Here our best hay-maker, forgive me this,
> It is our country style) in this warm shine
> I lie and dream of your full Mermaid wine:
> Oh, we have water mixt with claret lees,
> Drink apt to bring in drier heresies
> Than here, good only for the sonnet's strain,
> With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain:—

Think with one draught a man's invention fades,
Two cups had quite spoil'd Homer's Iliads.
'Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliff's wit,
Like where he will, and make him write worse yet:
Fill'd with such moisture, in most grievous qualms[1]
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms:
And so must I do this: and yet I think
It is a potion sent us down to drink
By special providence, keep us from fights,
Make us not laugh when we make legs to knights;
'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,
A medicine to obey our magistrates.

* * * * * *

Methinks the little wit I had is lost
Since I saw you, for wit is like a rest
Held up at tennis, which men do the best
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! Hard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtile flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolv'd to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life; then when there hath been thrown
Wit able enough to justify the town
For three days past, wit that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly,
Till that were cancell'd; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us, which alone
Was able to make the two next companies
Right witty, though but downright fools more wise.'

I shall not, in this place repeat Marlowe's celebrated song, 'Come live with me and be my love,' nor Sir Walter Raleigh's no less celebrated answer to it (they may both be found in Walton's Complete Angler, accompanied with scenery and remarks worthy of them); but I may quote as a specimen of the high and romantic tone in which the poets of this age thought and spoke of each other the 'Vision upon the conceipt of the Fairy Queen,' understood to be by Sir Walter Raleigh.

'Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that temple, where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn, and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,

[1] So in Rochester's Epigram.

'Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
When they translated David's Psalms.'

Whose tomb fair Love, and fairer Virtue kept.
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen:
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept;
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen,
For they this queen attended, in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the Heav'ns did pierce,
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
And curst th' access of that celestial thief.'

A higher strain of compliment cannot well be conceived than this, which raises your idea even of that which it disparages in the comparison, and makes you feel that nothing could have torn the writer from his idolatrous enthusiasm for Petrarch and his Laura's tomb, but Spenser's magic verses and diviner Faery Queen—the one lifted above mortality, the other brought from the skies!

The name of Drummond of Hawthornden is in a manner entwined in cypher with that of Ben Jonson. He has not done himself or Jonson any credit by his account of their conversation; but his Sonnets are in the highest degree elegant, harmonious, and striking. It appears to me that they are more in the manner of Petrarch than any others that we have, with a certain intenseness in the sentiment, an occasional glitter of thought, and uniform terseness of expression. The reader may judge for himself from a few examples.

'I know that all beneath the moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is wrought
In time's great periods shall return to nought;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know that all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of spright which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought;
That there is nothing lighter than vain praise.
I know frail beauty 's like the purple flow'r,
To which one morn oft birth and death affords:
That love a jarring is of minds' accords,
Where sense and will bring under reason's pow'r.
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, alas! I both must write and love.'

Another—

'Fair moon, who with thy cold and silver shine
Mak'st sweet the horror of the dreadful night,
Delighting the weak eye with smiles divine,
Which Phœbus dazzles with his too much light;

Bright queen of the first Hear'n, if in thy shrine
By turning off, and Hear'n's eternal might,
Thou hast not yet that once sweet fire of thine,
Endymion, forgot, and lovers' plight:
If cause like thine may pity breed in thee,
And pity somewhat else to it obtain,
Since thou hast power of dreams as well as he
That holds the golden rod and mortal chain;
Now while she sleeps,[1] in dolefull guise her show,
These tears, and the black map of all my woe.'

This is the eleventh sonnet: the twelfth is full of vile and forced conceits, without any sentiment at all; such as calling the Sun 'the Goldsmith of the stars,' 'the enameller of the moon,' and 'the Apelles of the flowers.' This is as bad as Cowley or Sir Philip Sidney. Here is one that is worth a million of such quaint devices.

'To the Nightingale.

Dear chorister, who from these shadows sends,[2]
Ere that the blushing morn dare show her light,
Such sad lamenting strains, that night attends
(Become all ear[3]) stars stay to hear thy plight.
If one whose grief even reach of thought transcends,
Who ne'er (not in a dream) did taste delight,
May thee importune who like case pretends,
And seem'st to joy in woe, in woe's despite:
Tell me (so may thou milder fortune try,
And long, long sing!) for what thou thus complains,[2]
Since winter's gone, and sun in dappled sky
Enamour'd smiles on woods and flow'ry plains?
The bird, as if my questions did her move,
With trembling wings sigh'd forth, 'I love, I love.'

Or if a mixture of the Della Cruscan style be allowed to enshrine the true spirit of love and poetry, we have it in the following address to the river Forth, on which his mistress had embarked.

'Slide soft, fair Forth, and make a chrystal plain,
Cut your white locks, and on your foamy face
Let not a wrinkle be, when you embrace
The boat that earth's perfections doth contain.
Winds wonder, and through wondering hold your peace,
Or if that you your hearts cannot restrain
From sending sighs, feeling a lover's case,
Sigh, and in her fair hair yourselves enchain.

[1] His mistress.
[2] Scotch for send'st, for complain'st, &c.
[3] 'I was all ear,' see Milton's Comus.

> Or take these sighs, which absence makes arise
> From my oppressed breast, and fill the sails,
> Or some sweet breath new brought from Paradise.
> The floods do smile, love o'er the winds prevails,
> And yet huge waves arise; the cause is this,
> The ocean strives with Forth the boat to kiss.'

This to the English reader will express the very soul of Petrarch, the molten breath of sentiment converted into the glassy essence of a set of glittering but still graceful conceits.

'The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets,' and the critic that tastes poetry, 'his ruin meets.' His feet are clogged with its honey, and his eyes blinded with its beauties; and he forgets his proper vocation, which is to buz and sting. I am afraid of losing my way in Drummond's 'sugar'd sonnetting;' and have determined more than once to break off abruptly; but another and another tempts the rash hand and curious eye, which I am loth not to give, and I give it accordingly: for if I did not write these Lectures to please myself, I am at least sure I should please nobody else. In fact, I conceive that what I have undertaken to do in this and former cases, is merely to read over a set of authors with the audience, as I would do with a friend, to point out a favourite passage, to explain an objection; or if a remark or a theory occurs, to state it in illustration of the subject, but neither to tire him nor puzzle myself with pedantic rules and pragmatical *formulas* of criticism that can do no good to any body. I do not come to the task with a pair of compasses or a ruler in my pocket, to see whether a poem is round or square, or to measure its mechanical dimensions, like a meter and alnager of poetry: it is not in my bond to look after excisable articles or contraband wares, or to exact severe penalties and forfeitures for trifling oversights, or to give formal notice of violent breaches of the three unities, of geography and chronology; or to distribute printed stamps and poetical licences (with blanks to be filled up) on Mount Parnassus. I do not come armed from top to toe with colons and semicolons, with glossaries and indexes, to adjust the spelling or reform the metre, or to prove by everlasting contradiction and querulous impatience, that former commentators did not know the meaning of their author, any more than I do, who am angry at them, only because I am out of humour with myself—as if the genius of poetry lay buried under the rubbish of the press; and the critic was the dwarf-enchanter who was to release its airy form from being stuck through with blundering points and misplaced commas; or to prevent its vital powers from being worm-eaten and consumed, letter by letter, in musty manuscripts and black-letter

print. I do not think that is the way to learn 'the gentle craft' of poesy or to teach it to others:—to imbibe or to communicate its spirit; which if it does not disentangle itself and soar above the obscure and trivial researches of antiquarianism is no longer itself, 'a Phœnix gazed by all.' At least, so it appeared to me (it is for others to judge whether I was right or wrong). In a word, I have endeavoured to feel what was good, and to 'give a reason for the faith that was in me' when necessary, and when in my power. This is what I have done, and what I must continue to do.

To return to Drummond.—I cannot but think that his Sonnets come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression, and should, when lengthened out into a series, form a history of the wayward moods of the poet's mind, the turns of his fate; and imprint the smile or frown of his mistress in indelible characters on the scattered leaves. I will give the two following, and have done with this author.

'In vain I haunt the cold and silver springs,
To quench the fever burning in my veins:
In vain (love's pilgrim) mountains, dales, and plains
I over-run; vain help long absence brings.
In vain, my friends, your counsel me constrains
To fly, and place my thoughts on other things.
Ah, like the bird that fired hath her wings,
The more I move the greater are my pains.
Desire, alas! desire a Zeuxis new,
From the orient borrowing gold, from western skies
Heavenly cinnabar, sets before my eyes
In every place her hair, sweet look and hue;
That fly, run, rest I, all doth prove but vain;
My life lies in those eyes which have me slain.'

The other is a direct imitation of Petrarch's description of the bower where he first saw Laura.

'Alexis, here she stay'd, among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair:
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mines;
Here sat she by these musked eglantines;
The happy flowers seem yet the print to bear:
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugar'd lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend an ear.

She here me first perceiv'd, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face:
Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
Here first I got a pledge of promised grace;
But ah! what serves to have been made happy so,
Sith passed pleasures double but new woe!'

I should, on the whole, prefer Drummond's Sonnets to Spenser's; and they leave Sidney's, picking their way through verbal intricacies and 'thorny queaches,'[1] at an immeasurable distance behind. Drummond's other poems have great, though not equal merit; and he may be fairly set down as one of our old English classics.

Ben Jonson's detached poetry I like much, as indeed I do all about him, except when he degraded himself by 'the laborious foolery' of some of his farcical characters, which he could not deal with sportively, and only made stupid and pedantic. I have been blamed for what I have said, more than once, in disparagement of Ben Jonson's comic humour; but I think he was himself aware of his infirmity, and has (not improbably) alluded to it in the following speech of Crites in Cynthia's Revels.

'Oh, how despised and base a thing is man,
If he not strive to erect his groveling thoughts
Above the strain of flesh! But how more cheap,
When even his best and understanding part
(The crown and strength of all his faculties)
Floats like a dead-drown'd body, on the stream
Of vulgar humour, mix'd with common'st dregs:
I suffer for their guilt now; and my soul
(Like one that looks on ill-affected eyes)
Is hurt with mere intention on their follies.
Why will I view them then? my sense might ask me:
Or is't a rarity or some new object
That strains my strict observance to this point:
But such is the perverseness of our nature,
That if we once but fancy levity,
(How antic and ridiculous soever
It suit with us) yet will our muffled thought
Chuse rather not to see it than avoid it, &c.

Ben Jonson had self-knowledge and self-reflection enough to apply this to himself. His tenaciousness on the score of critical objections does not prove that he was not conscious of them himself, but the contrary. The greatest egotists are those whom it is impossible to offend, because they are wholly and incurably blind to their own

[1] Chapman's Hymn to Pan.

defects; or if they could be made to see them, would instantly convert them into so many beauty-spots and ornamental graces. Ben Jonson's fugitive and lighter pieces are not devoid of the characteristic merits of that class of composition; but still often in the happiest of them, there is a specific gravity in the author's pen, that sinks him to the bottom of his subject, though buoyed up for a time with art and painted plumes, and produces a strange mixture of the mechanical and fanciful, of poetry and prose, in his songs and odes. For instance, one of his most airy effusions is the Triumph of his Mistress: yet there are some lines in it that seem inserted almost by way of burlesque. It is however well worth repeating.

'See the chariot at hand here of love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws it is a swan or a dove;
And well the car love guideth!
As she goes all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty:
And enamour'd, do wish so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.
Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead's smoother
Than words that soothe her:
And from her arch'd brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Ha' you mark'd but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Ha' you felt *the wool of beaver*?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?
Or *the nard in the fire?*
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh, so white! Oh so soft! Oh so sweet is she!'

His Discourse with Cupid, which follows, is infinitely delicate and *piquant*, and without one single blemish. It is a perfect 'nest of spicery.'

'Noblest Charis, you that are
Both my fortune and my star!
And do govern more my blood,
Than the various moon the flood!
Hear, what late discourse of you,
Love and I have had; and true.
'Mongst my Muses finding me,
Where he chanc't your name to see
Set, and to this softer strain;
'Sure,' said he, 'if I have brain,
This here sung can be no other,
By description, but my mother!
So hath Homer prais'd her hair;
So Anacreon drawn the air
Of her face, and made to rise,
Just about her sparkling eyes,
Both her brows, bent like my bow.
By her looks I do her know,
Which you call my shafts. And see!
Such my mother's blushes be,
As the bath your verse discloses
In her cheeks, of milk and roses;
Such as oft I wanton in.
And, above her even chin,
Have you plac'd the bank of kisses,
Where you say, men gather blisses,
Rip'ned with a breath more sweet,
Than when flowers and west-winds meet.
Nay, her white and polish'd neck,
With the lace that doth it deck,
Is my mother's! hearts of slain
Lovers, made into a chain!
And between each rising breast
Lies the valley, call'd my nest,
Where I sit and proyne my wings
After flight; and put new stings
To my shafts! Her very name
With my mother's is the same.'—
'I confess all,' I replied,
'And the glass hangs by her side,
And the girdle 'bout her waste,
All is Venus: save unchaste.
But, alas! thou seest the least
Of her good, who is the best
Of her sex; but could'st thou, Love,
Call to mind the forms, that strove
For the apple, and those three
Make in one, the same were she.
For this beauty yet doth hide

Something more than thou hast spied.
Outward grace weak love beguiles:
She is Venus when she smiles,
But she 's Juno when she walks,
And Minerva when she talks.'

In one of the songs in Cynthia's Revels, we find, amidst some very pleasing imagery, the origin of a celebrated line in modern poetry—

'Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, &c,'

This has not even the merit of originality, which is hard upon it. Ben Jonson had said two hundred years before,

'Oh, I could still
(Like melting snow upon some craggy hill)
Drop, drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is now a wither'd daffodil.'

His Ode to the Memory of Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morrison, has been much admired, but I cannot but think it one of his most fantastical and perverse performances.

I cannot, for instance, reconcile myself to such stanzas as these.

—'Of which we priests and poets say
Such truths as we expect for happy men,
And there he lives with memory; and Ben

THE STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went
Himself to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have exprest,
In this bright asterism;
Where it were friendship's schism
(Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry)
To separate these twi—
Lights, the Dioscori;
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design,
While that in Heaven, this light on earth doth shine.'

This seems as if because he cannot without difficulty write smoothly, he becomes rough and crabbed in a spirit of defiance, like those persons who cannot behave well in company, and affect rudeness to show their contempt for the opinions of others.

His Epistles are particularly good, equally full of strong sense and sound feeling. They shew that he was not without friends, whom he

esteemed, and by whom he was deservedly esteemed in return. The controversy started about his character is an idle one, carried on in the mere spirit of contradiction, as if he were either made up entirely of gall, or dipped in 'the milk of human kindness.' There is no necessity or ground to suppose either. He was no doubt a sturdy, plain-spoken, honest, well-disposed man, inclining more to the severe than the amiable side of things; but his good qualities, learning, talents, and convivial habits preponderated over his defects of temper or manners; and in a course of friendship some difference of character, even a little roughness or acidity, may relish to the palate; and olives may be served up with effect as well as sweetmeats. Ben Jonson, even by his quarrels and jealousies, does not seem to have been curst with the last and damning disqualification for friendship, heartless indifference. He was also what is understood by a *good fellow*, fond of good cheer and good company: and the first step for others to enjoy your society, is for you to enjoy theirs. If any one can do without the world, it is certain that the world can do quite as well without him. His 'verses inviting a friend to supper,' give us as familiar an idea of his private habits and character as his Epistle to Michael Drayton, that to Selden, &c., his lines to the memory of Shakespear, and his noble prose eulogy on Lord Bacon, in his disgrace, do a favourable one.

Among the best of these (perhaps the very best) is the address to Sir Robert Wroth, which besides its manly moral sentiments, conveys a strikingly picturesque description of rural sports and manners at this interesting period.

'How blest art thou, canst love the country, Wroth,
Whether by choice, or fate, or both!
And though so near the city and the court,
Art ta'en with neither's vice nor sport:
That at great times, art no ambitious guest
Of sheriff's dinner, or of mayor's feast.
Nor com'st to view the better cloth of state;
The richer hangings, or the crown-plate;
Nor throng'st (when masquing is) to have a sight
Of the short bravery of the night;
To view the jewels, stuffs, the pains, the wit
There wasted, some not paid for yet!
But canst at home in thy securer rest,
Live with un-bought provision blest;
Free from proud porches or their guilded roofs,
'Mongst lowing herds and solid hoofs:
Along the curled woods and painted meads,
Through which a serpent river leads

To some cool courteous shade, which he calls his,
And makes sleep softer than it is!
Or if thou list the night in watch to break,
A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak,
In spring oft roused for their master's sport,
Who for it makes thy house his court;
Or with thy friends, the heart of all the year,
Divid'st upon the lesser deer;
In autumn, at the partrich mak'st a flight,
And giv'st thy gladder guests the sight;
And in the winter hunt'st the flying hare,
More for thy exercise than fare;
While all that follows, their glad ears apply
To the full greatness of the cry:
Or hawking at the river or the bush,
Or shooting at the greedy thrush,
Thou dost with some delight the day out-wear,
Although the coldest of the year!
The whil'st the several seasons thou hast seen
Of flow'ry fields, of copses green,
The mowed meadows, with the fleeced sheep,
And feasts that either shearers keep;
The ripened ears yet humble in their height,
And furrows laden with their weight;
The apple-harvest that doth longer last;
The hogs return'd home fat from mast;
The trees cut out in log; and those boughs made
A fire now, that lent a shade!
Thus Pan and Sylvan having had their rites,
Comus puts in for new delights;
And fills thy open hall with mirth and cheer,
As if in Saturn's reign it were;
Apollo's harp and Hermes' lyre resound,
Nor are the Muses strangers found:
The rout of rural folk come thronging in,
(Their rudeness then is thought no sin)
Thy noblest spouse affords them welcome grace;
And the great heroes of her race
Sit mixt with loss of state or reverence.
Freedom doth with degree dispense.
The jolly wassall walks the often round,
And in their cups their cares are drown'd:
They think not then which side the cause shall leese,
Nor how to get the lawyer fees.
Such, and no other was that age of old,
Which boasts t' have had the head of gold.
And such since thou canst make thine own content,
Strive, Wroth, to live long innocent.
Let others watch in guilty arms, and stand

The fury of a rash command,
Go enter breaches, meet the cannon's rage,
That they may sleep with scars in age.
And show their feathers shot and colours torn,
And brag that they were therefore born.
Let this man sweat, and wrangle at the bar
For every price in every jar
And change possessions oftener with his breath,
Than either money, war or death:
Let him, than hardest sires, more disinherit,
And each where boast it as his merit,
To blow up orphans, widows, and their states;
And think his power doth equal Fate's.
Let that go heap a mass of wretched wealth,
Purchas'd by rapine, worse than stealth,
And brooding o'er it sit, with broadest eyes,
Not doing good, scarce when he dies.
Let thousands more go flatter vice, and win,
By being organs to great sin,
Get place and honour, and be glad to keep
The secrets, that shall breake their sleep:
And, so they ride in purple, eat in plate,
Though poyson, think it a great fate.
But thou, my Wroth, if I can truth apply,
Shalt neither that, nor this envy:
Thy peace is made; and, when man's state is well,
'Tis better, if he there can dwell.
God wisheth none should wrack on a strange shelf;
To him man's dearer than t' himself.
And, howsoever we may think things sweet,
He alwayes gives what he knows meet;
Which who can use is happy: such be thou.
Thy morning's and thy evening's vow
Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to find
A body sound, with sounder mind;
To do thy country service, thy self right;
That neither want do thee affright,
Nor death; but when thy latest sand is spent,
Thou mayst think life a thing but lent.'

Of all the poetical Epistles of this period, however, that of Daniel to the Countess of Cumberland, for weight of thought and depth of feeling, bears the palm. The reader will not peruse this effusion with less interest or pleasure, from knowing that it is a favourite with Mr. Wordsworth.

'He that of such a height hath built his mind,
And rear'd the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,

As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame
Of his resolved pow'rs; nor all the wind
Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong
His settled peace, or to disturb the same:
What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may
The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey!
And with how free an eye doth he look down
Upon these lower regions of turmoil,
Where all the storms of passions mainly beat
On flesh and blood: where honour, pow'r, renown,
Are only gay afflictions, golden toil;
Where greatness stands upon as feeble feet,
As frailty doth; and only great doth seem
To little minds, who do it so esteem.
He looks upon the mightiest monarch's wars
But only as on stately robberies;
Where evermore the fortune that prevails
Must be the right: the ill-succeeding mars
The fairest and the best-fac'd enterprize.
Great pirate Pompey lesser pirates quails:
Justice, he sees (as if seduced) still
Conspires with pow'r, whose cause must not be ill.
He sees the face of right t' appear as manifold
As are the passions of uncertain man.
Who puts it in all colours, all attires,
To serve his ends, and make his courses hold.
He sees, that let deceit work what it can,
Plot and contrive base ways to high desires;
That the all-guiding Providence doth yet
All disappoint, and mocks this smoke of wit.
Nor is he mov'd with all the thunder-cracks
Of tyrants' threats, or with the surly brow
Of pow'r, that proudly sits on others' crimes:
Charg'd with more crying sins than those he checks.
The storms of sad confusion, that may grow
Up in the present for the coming times,
Appal not him; that hath no side at all,
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.
Although his heart (so near ally'd to earth)
Cannot but pity the perplexed state
Of troublous and distress'd mortality,
That thus make way unto the ugly birth
Of their own sorrows, and do still beget
Affliction upon imbecility:
Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,
He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.
And whilst distraught ambition compasses,
And is encompass'd; whilst as craft deceives,
And is deceived; whilst man doth ransack man,

And builds on blood, and rises by distress;
And th' inheritance of desolation leaves
To great expecting hopes: he looks thereon,
As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,
And bears no venture in impiety.'

Michael Drayton's Poly-Olbion is a work of great length and of unabated freshness and vigour in itself, though the monotony of the subject tires the reader. He describes each place with the accuracy of a topographer, and the enthusiasm of a poet, as if his Muse were the very *genius loci*. His Heroical Epistles are also excellent. He has a few lighter pieces, but none of exquisite beauty or grace. His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest, and repays the husbandman's toil, but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds.

P. Fletcher's Purple Island is nothing but a long enigma, describing the body of a man, with the heart and veins, and the blood circulating in them, under the fantastic designation of the Purple Island.

The other Poets whom I shall mention, and who properly belong to the age immediately following, were William Brown, Carew, Crashaw, Herrick, and Marvell. Brown was a pastoral poet, with much natural tenderness and sweetness, and a good deal of allegorical quaintness and prolixity. Carew was an elegant court-trifler. Herrick was an amorist, with perhaps more fancy than feeling, though he has been called by some the English Anacreon. Crashaw was a hectic enthusiast in religion and in poetry, and erroneous in both. Marvell deserves to be remembered as a true poet as well as patriot, not in the best of times.—I will, however, give short specimens from each of these writers, that the reader may judge for himself; and be led by his own curiosity, rather than my recommendation, to consult the originals. Here is one by T. Carew.

'Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose:
For in your beauties, orient deep
These flow'rs, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love, Heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more, whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more, where those stars light,
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more, if east or west
The phœnix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.'

The Hue and Cry of Love, the Epitaphs on Lady Mary Villiers, and the Friendly Reproof to Ben Jonson for his angry Farewell to the stage, are in the author's best manner. We may perceive, however, a frequent mixture of the superficial and common-place, with far-fetched and improbable conceits.

Herrick is a writer who does not answer the expectations I had formed of him. He is in a manner a modern discovery, and so far has the freshness of antiquity about him. He is not trite and thread-bare. But neither is he likely to become so. He is a writer of epigrams, not of lyrics. He has point and ingenuity, but I think little of the spirit of love or wine. From his frequent allusion to pearls and rubies, one might take him for a lapidary instead of a poet. One of his pieces is entitled

'*The Rock of Rubies, and the Quarry of Pearls.*

Some ask'd me where the rubies grew;
And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.

Some ask'd how pearls did grow, and where;
Then spoke I to my girl
To part her lips, and shew them there
The quarrelets of pearl.'

Now this is making a petrefaction both of love and poetry.

His poems, from their number and size, are 'like the motes that play in the sun's beams;' that glitter to the eye of fancy, but leave no distinct impression on the memory. The two best are a translation of Anacreon, and a successful and spirited imitation of him.

'*The Wounded Cupid.*

Cupid, as he lay among
Roses, by a bee was stung.
Whereupon, in anger flying
To his mother said thus, crying,

Help, oh help, your boy 's a dying!
And why, my pretty lad? said she.
Then, blubbering, replied he,
A winged snake has bitten me,
Which country-people call a bee.
At which she smiled; then with her hairs
And kisses drying up his tears,
Alas, said she, my wag! if this
Such a pernicious torment is;
Come, tell me then, how great 's the smart
Of those thou woundest with thy dart?'

The Captive Bee, or the Little Filcher, is his own.

'As Julia once a slumbering lay,
It chanced a bee did fly that way,
After a dew or dew-like show'r,
To tipple freely in a flow'r.
For some rich flow'r he took the lip
Of Julia, and began to sip:
But when he felt he suck'd from thence
Honey, and in the quintessence;
He drank so much he scarce could stir;
So Julia took the pilferer.
And thus surpris'd, as filchers use,
He thus began himself to excuse:
Sweet lady-flow'r! I never brought
Hither the least one thieving thought;
But taking those rare lips of yours
For some fresh, fragrant, luscious flow'rs,
I thought I might there take a taste,
Where so much syrup ran at waste:
Besides, know this, I never sting
The flow'r that gives me nourishing;
But with a kiss or thanks, do pay
For honey that I bear away.
This said, he laid his little scrip
Of honey 'fore her ladyship:
And told her, as some tears did fall,
That that he took, and that was all.
At which she smil'd, and bid him go,
And take his bag, but thus much know,
When next he came a pilfering so,
He should from her full lips derive
Honey enough to fill his hive.'

Of Marvell I have spoken with such praise, as appears to me his due, on another occasion: but the public are deaf, except to proof or to their own prejudices, and I will therefore give an example of the sweetness and power of his verse.

'*To his Coy Mistress.*

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood;
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest.
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should shew your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state;
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lye
Desarts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity:
And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave 's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now, therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd pow'r.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball;
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.'

In Brown's Pastorals, notwithstanding the weakness and prolixity of his general plan, there are repeated examples of single lines and passages of extreme beauty and delicacy, both of sentiment and description, such as the following Picture of Night.

'Clamour grew dumb, unheard was shepherd's song,
And silence girt the woods: no warbling tongue
Talk'd to the echo; Satyrs broke their dance,
And all the upper world lay in a trance,
Only the curled streams soft chidings kept;
And little gales that from the green leaf swept
Dry summer's dust, in fearful whisp'rings stirr'd,
As loth to waken any singing bird.'

Poetical beauties of this sort are scattered, not sparingly, over the green lap of nature through almost every page of our author's writings. His description of the squirrel hunted by mischievous boys, of the flowers stuck in the windows like the hues of the rainbow, and innumerable others might be quoted.

His Philarete (the fourth song of the Shepherd's Pipe) has been said to be the origin of Lycidas: but there is no resemblance, except that both are pastoral elegies for the loss of a friend. The Inner Temple Mask has also been made the foundation of Comus, with as little reason. But so it is: if an author is once detected in borrowing, he will be suspected of plagiarism ever after: and every writer that finds an ingenious or partial editor, will be made to set up his claim of originality against him. A more serious charge of this kind has been urged against the principal character in Paradise Lost (that of Satan), which is said to have been taken from Marino, an Italian poet. Of this, we may be able to form some judgment, by a comparison with Crashaw's translation of Marino's Sospetto d'Herode. The description of Satan alluded to, is given in the following stanzas:

'Below the bottom of the great abyss,
There where one centre reconciles all things,
The world's profound heart pants; there placed is
Mischief's old master; close about him clings
A curl'd knot of embracing snakes, that kiss
His correspondent cheeks; these loathsome strings
Hold the perverse prince in eternal ties
Fast bound, since first he forfeited the skies.

The judge of torments, and the king of tears,
He fills a burnish'd throne of quenchless fire;
And for his old fair robes of light, he wears
A gloomy mantle of dark flames; the tire

That crowns his hated head, on high appears;
Where seven tall horns (his empire's pride) aspire;
And to make up hell's majesty, each horn
Seven crested hydras horribly adorn.

His eyes, the sullen dens of death and night,
Startle the dull air with a dismal red;
Such his fell glances as the fatal light
Of staring comets, that look kingdoms dead.
From his black nostrils and blue lips, in spite
Of hell's own stink, a worser stench is spread.
His breath hell's lightning is; and each deep groan
Disdains to think that heaven thunders alone.

His flaming eyes' dire exhalation
Unto a dreadful pile gives fiery breath;
Whose unconsum'd consumption preys upon
The never-dying life of a long death.
In this sad house of slow destruction
(His shop of flames) he fries himself, beneath
A mass of woes; his teeth for torment gnash,
While his steel sides sound with his tail's strong lash.'

This portrait of monkish superstition does not equal the grandeur of Milton's description.

——'His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd and the excess
Of glory obscured.'

Milton has got rid of the horns and tail, the vulgar and physical *insignia* of the devil, and clothed him with other greater and intellectual terrors, reconciling beauty and sublimity, and converting the grotesque and deformed into the *ideal* and classical. Certainly Milton's mind rose superior to all others in this respect, on the outstretched wings of philosophic contemplation, in not confounding the depravity of the will with physical distortion, or supposing that the distinctions of good and evil were only to be subjected to the gross ordeal of the senses. In the subsequent stanzas, we however find the traces of some of Milton's boldest imagery, though its effect is injured by the incongruous mixture above stated.

'Struck with these great concurrences of things,[1]
Symptoms so deadly unto death and him;
Fain would he have forgot what fatal strings
Eternally bind each rebellious limb.

[1] Alluding to the fulfilment of the prophecies and the birth of the Messiah.

He shook himself, and spread his spacious wings,
Which like two bosom'd sails [1] embrace the dim
Air, with a dismal shade, but all in vain;
Of sturdy adamant is his strong chain.

While thus heav'n's highest counsels, by the low
Footsteps of their effects, he traced too well,
He tost his troubled eyes, embers that glow
Now with new rage, and wax too hot for hell.
With his foul claws he fenced his furrow'd brow,
And gave a ghastly shriek, whose horrid yell
Ran trembling through the hollow vaults of night.'

The poet adds—

'The while his twisted tail he knaw'd for spite.'

There is no keeping in this. This action of meanness and mere vulgar spite, common to the most contemptible creatures, takes away from the terror and power just ascribed to the prince of Hell, and implied in the nature of the consequences attributed to his every movement of mind or body. Satan's soliloquy to himself is more beautiful and more in character at the same time.

'Art thou not Lucifer? he to whom the droves
Of stars that gild the morn in charge were given?
The nimblest of the lightning-winged loves?
The fairest and the first-born smile of Heav'n?
Look in what pomp the mistress planet moves,
Reverently circled by the lesser seven:
Such and so rich the flames that from thine eyes
Opprest the common people of the skies?
Ah! wretch! what boots it to cast back thine eyes
Where dawning hope no beam of comfort shews?' &c.

This is true beauty and true sublimity: it is also true pathos and morality: for it interests the mind, and affects it powerfully with the idea of glory tarnished, and happiness forfeited with the loss of virtue: but from the horns and tail of the brute-demon, imagination cannot reascend to the Son of the morning, nor be dejected by the transition from weal to woe, which it cannot, without a violent effort, picture to itself.

In our author's account of Cruelty, the chief minister of Satan, there is also a considerable approach to Milton's description of Death and Sin, the portress of hell-gates.

'Thrice howl'd the caves of night, and thrice the sound,
Thundering upon the banks of those black lakes,

[1] 'He spreads his sail-broad vans.'—Par. Lost, b. ii. l. 927.

> Rung through the hollow vaults of hell profound:
> At last her listening ears the noise o'ertake,
> She lifts her scaly steeps, and looking round,
> A general hiss,[1] from the whole tire of snakes
> Redoubling through hell's inmost caverns came,
> In answer to her formidable name.
>
> 'Mongst all the palaces in hell's command,
> No one so resembles as this of hers,
> The adamantine doors forever stand
> Impenetrable, both to prayers and years.
> The wall's inscrutable mold, as hard
> Of time, as teeth of hungry rats fears.'

On the whole, this poem, though Milton has undoubtedly availed himself of many ideas and passages in it, raises instead of lowering our conception of him, by showing how much more he added to it than he has taken from it.

Crashaw's translation of Strada's description of the Contention between a nightingale and a musician, is elaborate and spirited, but not equal to Fairfax's version of the same story in his Lover's Melancholy. One line may serve as a specimen of delicate quaintness, and of Crashaw's style in general.

> 'And with a quavering cypress tame the strings.'

Sir Philip Sidney is a writer for whom I cannot acquire a taste. As Mr. Burke said, "he could not love the French Republic"—so I may say, that I cannot love the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, with all my good-will to it. It will not do for me, however, to imitate the summary petulance of the epigrammatist.

> "The reason why I cannot tell,
> But I don't like you, Dr. Fell."

I must give my reasons, "on compulsion," for not speaking well of a person like Sir Philip Sidney—

> "The soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword,
> The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,"

the splendour of whose personal accomplishments, and of whose wide-spread fame was, in his life time,

> ——"Like a gate of steel,
> Fronting the sun, that renders back
> His figure and his heat"—

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[1] See Satan's reception on his return to Pandemonium, in book x. of Paradise Lost.

a writer too who was universally read and enthusiastically admired for a century after his death, and who has been admired with scarce less enthusiastic, but with a more distant homage, for another century, after ceasing to be read.

We have lost the art of reading, or the privilege of writing, voluminously, since the days of Addison. Learning no longer weaves the interminable page with patient drudgery, nor ignorance pores over it with implicit faith. As authors multiply in number, books diminish in size; we cannot now, as formerly, swallow libraries whole in a single folio: solid quarto has given place to slender duodecimo, and the dingy letter-press contracts its dimensions, and retreats before the white, unsullied, faultless margin. Modern authorship is become a species of stenography: we contrive even to read by proxy. We skim the cream of prose without any trouble; we get at the quintessence of poetry without loss of time. The staple commodity, the coarse, heavy, dirty, unwieldy bullion of books is driven out of the market of learning, and the intercourse of the literary world is carried on, and the credit of the great capitalists sustained by the flimsy circulating medium of magazines and reviews. Those who are chiefly concerned in catering for the taste of others, and serving up critical opinions in a compendious, elegant, and portable form, are not forgetful of themselves: they are not scrupulously solicitous, idly inquisitive about the real merits, the *bona fide* contents of the works they are deputed to appraise and value, any more than the reading public who employ them. They look no farther for the contents of the work than the title page, and pronounce a peremptory decision on its merits or defects by a glance at the name and party of the writer. This state of polite letters seems to admit of improvement in only one respect, which is to go a step further, and write for the amusement and edification of the world, accounts of works that were never either written or read at all, and to cry up or abuse the authors by name, although they have no existence but in the critic's invention. This would save a great deal of labour in vain: anonymous critics might pounce upon the defenceless heads of fictitious candidates for fame and bread; reviews, from being novels founded upon facts, would aspire to be pure romances; and we should arrive at the *beau ideal* of a commonwealth of letters, at the euthanasia of thought, and Millennium of criticism!

At the time that Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia was written, those middle men, the critics, were not known. The author and reader came into immediate contact, and seemed never tired of each other's company. We are more fastidious and dissipated: the effeminacy of modern taste would, I am afraid, shrink back affrighted at the

formidable sight of this once popular work, which is about as long (*horresco referens!*) as all Walter Scott's novels put together; but besides its size and appearance, it has, I think, other defects of a more intrinsic and insuperable nature. It is to me one of the greatest monuments of the abuse of intellectual power upon record. It puts one in mind of the court dresses and preposterous fashions of the time which are grown obsolete and disgusting. It is not romantic, but scholastic; not poetry, but casuistry; not nature, but art, and the worst sort of art, which thinks it can do better than nature. Of the number of fine things that are constantly passing through the author's mind, there is hardly one that he has not contrived to spoil, and to spoil purposely and maliciously, in order to aggrandize our idea of himself. Out of five hundred folio pages, there are hardly, I conceive, half a dozen sentences expressed simply and directly, with the sincere desire to convey the image implied, and without a systematic interpolation of the wit, learning, ingenuity, wisdom and everlasting impertinence of the writer, so as to disguise the object, instead of displaying it in its true colours and real proportions. Every page is 'with centric and eccentric scribbled o'er;' his Muse is tattooed and tricked out like an Indian goddess. He writes a court-hand, with flourishes like a schoolmaster; his figures are wrought in chain-stitch. All his thoughts are forced and painful births, and may be said to be delivered by the Cæsarean operation. At last, they become distorted and ricketty in themselves; and before they have been cramped and twisted and swaddled into lifelessness and deformity. Imagine a writer to have great natural talents, great powers of memory and invention, an eye for nature, a knowledge of the passions, much learning and equal industry; but that he is so full of a consciousness of all this, and so determined to make the reader conscious of it at every step, that he becomes a complete intellectual coxcomb or nearly so;—that he never lets a casual observation pass without perplexing it with an endless, running commentary, that he never states a feeling without so many *circumambages*, without so many interlineations and parenthetical remarks on all that can be said for it, and anticipations of all that can be said against it, and that he never mentions a fact without giving so many circumstances and conjuring up so many things that it is like or not like, that you lose the main clue of the story in its infinite ramifications and intersections; and we may form some faint idea of the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, which is spun with great labour out of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over the face of nature! This is not, as far as I can judge, an exaggerated description: but as near the truth as I can make it. The proofs are not far to seek. Take the first sentence, or open the

volume any where and read. I will, however, take one of the most beautiful passages near the beginning, to shew how the subject-matter, of which the noblest use might have been made, is disfigured by the affectation of the style, and the importunate and vain activity of the writer's mind. The passage I allude to, is the celebrated description of Arcadia.

'So that the third day after, in the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floor against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep, and rising from under a tree (which that night had been their pavilion) they went on their journey, which by and by welcomed Musidorus' eyes (wearied with the wasted soil of Laconia) with welcome prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble valleys whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so to, by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs with bleating oratory craved the dam's comfort; here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice-music. As for the houses of the country (for many houses came under their eye) they were scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off, as that it barred mutual succour; a shew, as it were, of an accompaniable solitariness, and of a civil wildness. I pray you, said Musidorus, (then first unsealing his long-silent lips) what countries be these we pass through, which are so divers in shew, the one wanting no store, the other having no store but of want. The country, answered Claius, where you were cast ashore, and now are past through is Laconia: but this country (where you now set your foot) is Arcadia.'

One would think the very name might have lulled his senses to delightful repose in some still, lonely valley, and have laid the restless spirit of Gothic quaintness, witticism, and conceit in the lap of classic elegance and pastoral simplicity. Here are images too of touching beauty and everlasting truth that needed nothing but to be simply and nakedly expressed to have made a picture equal (nay superior) to the allegorical representation of the Four Seasons of Life by Georgioni. But no! He cannot let his imagination or that of the reader dwell for a moment on the beauty or power of the real object. He thinks nothing is done, unless it is his doing. He must officiously and gratuitously interpose between you and the subject as the Cicerone of Nature, distracting the eye and the mind by continual uncalled-for interruptions, analysing, dissecting, disjointing, murdering every thing,

and reading a pragmatical, self-sufficient lecture over the dead body of nature. The moving spring of his mind is not sensibility or imagination, but dry, literal, unceasing craving after intellectual excitement, which is indifferent to pleasure or pain, to beauty or deformity, and likes to awe everything to its own perverse efforts rather than the sense of power in other things. It constantly interferes to perplex and neutralise. It never leaves the mind in a wise passiveness. In the infancy of taste, the froward pupils of art took nature to pieces, as spoiled children do a watch, to see what was in it. After taking it to pieces they could not, with all their cunning, put it together again, so as to restore circulation to the heart, or its living hue to the face! The quaint and pedantic style here objected to was not however the natural growth of untutored fancy, but an artificial excrescence transferred from logic and rhetoric to poetry. It was not owing to the excess of imagination, but of the want of it, that is, to the predominance of the mere understanding or dialectic faculty over the imaginative and the sensitive. It is in fact poetry degenerating at every step into prose, sentiment entangling itself in a controversy, from the habitual leaven of polemics and casuistry in the writer's mind. The poet insists upon matters of fact from the beauty or grandeur that accompanies them; our prose-poet insists upon them because they are matters of fact, and buries the beauty and grandeur in a heap of common rubbish, 'like two grains of wheat in a bushel of chaff.' The true poet illustrates for ornament or use: the fantastic pretender, only because he is not easy till he can translate every thing out of itself into something else. Imagination consists in enriching one idea by another, which has the same feeling or set of associations belonging to it in a higher or more striking degree; the quaint or scholastic style consists in comparing one thing to another by the mere process of abstraction, and the more forced and naked the comparison, the less of harmony or congruity there is in it, the more wire-drawn and ambiguous the link of generalisation by which objects are brought together, the greater is the triumph of the false and fanciful style. There was a marked instance of the difference in some lines from Ben Jonson which I have above quoted, and which, as they are alternate examples of the extremes of both in the same author and in the same short poem, there can be nothing invidious in giving. In conveying an idea of female softness and sweetness, he asks—

> 'Have you felt the wool of the beaver,
> Or swan's down ever?
> Or smelt of the bud of the brier,
> Or the nard in the fire?'

Now 'the swan's down' is a striking and beautiful image of the most delicate and yielding softness; but we have no associations of a pleasing sort with the wool of the beaver. The comparison is dry, hard, and barren of effect. It may establish the matter of fact, but detracts from and impairs the sentiment. The smell of 'the bud of the briar' is a double-distilled essence of sweetness: besides, there are all the other concomitant ideas of youth, beauty, and blushing modesty, which blend with and heighten the immediate feeling: but the poetical reader was not bound to know even what *nard* is (it is merely a learned substance, a non-entity to the imagination) nor whether it has a fragrant or disagreeable scent when thrown into the fire, till Ben Jonson went out of his way to give him this pedantic piece of information. It is a mere matter of fact or of experiment; and while the experiment is making in reality or fancy, the sentiment stands still; or even taking it for granted in the literal and scientific sense, we are where we were; it does not enhance the passion to be expressed: we have no love for the smell of nard in the fire, but we have an old, a long-cherished one, from infancy, for the bud of the briar. Sentiment, as Mr. Burke said of nobility, is a thing of inveterate prejudice, and cannot be created, as some people (learned and unlearned) are inclined to suppose, out of fancy or out of any thing by the wit of man. The artificial and natural style do not alternate in this way in the Arcadia: the one is but the Helot, the eyeless drudge of the other. Thus even in the above passage, which is comparatively beautiful and simple in its general structure, we have 'the bleating oratory' of lambs, as if anything could be more unlike oratory than the bleating of lambs; we have a young shepherdess knitting, whose hands keep time not to her voice, but to her 'voice-music,' which introduces a foreign and questionable distinction, merely to perplex the subject; we have meadows enamelled with all sorts of 'eye-pleasing flowers,' as if it were necessary to inform the reader that flowers pleased the eye, or as if they did not please any other sense: we have valleys refreshed 'with *silver* streams,' an epithet that has nothing to do with the refreshment here spoken of: we have 'an accompaniable solitariness and a civil wildness,' which are a pair of very laboured antitheses; in fine, we have 'want of store, and store of want.'

Again, the passage describing the shipwreck of Pyrochles, has been much and deservedly admired: yet it is not free from the same inherent faults.

'But a little way off they saw the mast (of the vessel) whose proud height now lay along, like a widow having lost her mate, of whom she held her honour;' [This needed explanation] 'but upon the mast they saw

a young man (at least if it were a man) bearing show of about eighteen years of age, who sat (as on horseback) having nothing upon him but his shirt, which being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea. [This is a sort of alliteration in natural history] "on which the sun (then near his western home) did shoot some of his beams. His hair, (which the young men of Greece used to wear very long) was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it, as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty, set forth by the strangeness both of his seat and gesture; for holding his head up full of unmoved majesty, he held a sword aloft with his fair arm, which often he waved about his crown, as though he would threaten the world in that extremity."

If the original sin of alliteration, antithesis, and metaphysical conceit could be weeded out of this passage, there is hardly a more heroic one to be found in prose or poetry.

Here is one more passage marred in the making. A shepherd is supposed to say of his mistress,

"Certainly, as her eyelids are more pleasant to behold, than two white kids climbing up a fair tree and browsing on his tenderest branches, and yet are nothing, compared to the day-shining stars contained in them; and as her breath is more sweet than a gentle south-west wind, which comes creeping over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the extreme heat of summer; and yet is nothing compared to the honey-flowing speech that breath doth carry; no more all that our eyes can see of her (though when they have seen her, what else they shall ever see is but dry stubble after clover grass) is to be matched with the flock of unspeakable virtues, laid up delightfully in that best-builded fold."

Now here are images of singular beauty and of Eastern originality and daring, followed up with enigmatical or unmeaning commonplaces, because he never knows when to leave off, and thinks he can never be too wise or too dull for his reader. He loads his prose Pegasus, like a pack-horse, with all that comes and with a number of little trifling circumstances, that fall off, and you are obliged to stop to pick them up by the way. He cannot give his imagination a moment's pause, thinks nothing done, while any thing remains to do, and exhausts nearly all that can be said upon a subject, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The above passages are taken from the beginning of the Arcadia, when the author's style was hardly yet formed. The following is a less favourable, but fairer specimen of the work. It is the model of a love-letter, and is only longer than that of Adriano de Armada, in Love's Labour Lost.

"Most blessed paper, which shalt kiss that hand, whereto all blessedness is in nature a servant, do not yet disdain to carry with thee the woeful

words of a miser now despairing: neither be afraid to appear before her, bearing the base title of the sender. For no sooner shall that divine hand touch thee, but that thy baseness shall be turned to most high preferment. Therefore mourn boldly my ink: for while she looks upon you, your blackness will shine: cry out boldly my lamentation, for while she reads you, your cries will be music. Say then (O happy messenger of a most unhappy message) that the too soon born and too late dying creature, which dares not speak, no, not look, no, not scarcely think (as from his miserable self unto her heavenly highness), only presumes to desire thee (in the time that her eyes and voice do exalt thee) to say, and in this manner to say, not from him, oh no, that were not fit, but of him, thus much unto her sacred judgment. O you, the only honour to women, to men the only admiration, you that being armed by love, defy him that armed you, in this high estate wherein you have placed me' [*i.e.* the letter] 'yet let me remember him to whom I am bound for bringing me to your presence: and let me remember him, who (since he is yours, how mean soever he be) it is reason you have an account of him. The wretch (yet your wretch) though with languishing steps runs fast to his grave; and will you suffer a temple (how poorly built soever, but yet a temple of your deity) to be rased? But he dyeth: it is most true, he dyeth: and he in whom you live, to obey you, dyeth. Whereof though he plain, he doth not complain, for it is a harm, but no wrong, which he hath received. He dies, because in woeful language all his senses tell him, that such is your pleasure: for if you will not that he live, alas, alas, what followeth, what followeth of the most ruined Dorus, but his end? End, then, evil-destined Dorus, end; and end thou woeful letter, end: for it sufficeth her wisdom to know, that her heavenly will shall be accomplished.' Lib. ii. p. 117.

This style relishes neither of the lover nor the poet. Nine-tenths of the work are written in this manner. It is in the very manner of those books of gallantry and chivalry, which, with the labyrinths of their style, and 'the reason of their unreasonableness,' turned the fine intellects of the Knight of La Mancha. In a word (and not to speak it profanely), the Arcadia is a riddle, a rebus, an acrostic in folio: it contains about 4000 far-fetched similes, and 6000 impracticable dilemmas, about 10,000 reasons for doing nothing at all, and as many more against it; numberless alliterations, puns, questions and commands, and other figures of rhetoric; about a score good passages, that one may turn to with pleasure, and the most involved, irksome, impregressive, and heteroclite subject that ever was chosen to exercise the pen or patience of man. It no longer adorns the toilette or lies upon the pillow of Maids of Honour and Peeresses in their own right (the Pamelas and Philocleas of a later age), but remains upon the shelves of the libraries of the curious in long works and great names, a monument to shew that the author was one of the ablest men and worst writers of the age of Elizabeth.

His Sonnets, inlaid in the Arcadia, are jejune, far-fetched and frigid. I shall select only one that has been much commended. It is to the High Way where his mistress had passed, a strange subject, but not unsuitable to the author's genius.

> 'High-way, since you my chief Parnassus be,
> And that my Muse (to some ears not unsweet)
> Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet
> More oft than to a chamber melody;
> Now blessed you bear onward blessed me
> To her, where I my heart safe left shall meet;
> My Muse, and I must you of duty greet
> With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
> Be you still fair, honour'd by public heed,
> By no encroachment wrong'd, nor time forgot;
> Nor blamed for blood, nor shamed for sinful deed;
> And that you know, I envy you no lot
> Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss,
> Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss.'

The answer of the High-way has not been preserved, but the sincerity of this appeal must no doubt have moved the stocks and stones to rise and sympathise. His Defence of Poetry is his most readable performance; there he is quite at home, in a sort of special pleader's office, where his ingenuity, scholastic subtlety, and tenaciousness in argument stand him in good stead; and he brings off poetry with flying colours; for he was a man of wit, of sense, and learning, though not a poet of true taste or unsophisticated genius.

LECTURE VII

CHARACTER OF LORD BACON'S WORKS — COMPARED AS TO STYLE WITH SIR THOMAS BROWN AND JEREMY TAYLOR.

Lord Bacon has been called (and justly) one of the wisest of mankind. The word *wisdom* characterises him more than any other. It was not that he did so much himself to advance the knowledge of man or nature, as that he saw what others had done to advance it, and what was still wanting to its full accomplishment. He stood upon the high 'vantage ground of genius and learning; and traced, 'as in a map the voyager his course,' the long devious march of human intellect, its elevations and depressions, its windings and its

errors. He had a 'large discourse of reason, looking before and after.' He had made an exact and extensive survey of human acquirements: he took the gauge and meter, the depths and soundings of the human capacity. He was master of the comparative anatomy of the mind of man, of the balance of power among the different faculties. He had thoroughly investigated and carefully registered the steps and processes of his own thoughts, with their irregularities and failures, their liabilities to wrong conclusions, either from the difficulties of the subject, or from moral causes, from prejudice, indolence, vanity, from conscious strength or weakness; and he applied this self-knowledge on a mighty scale to the general advances or retrograde movements of the aggregate intellect of the world. He knew well what the goal and crown of moral and intellectual power was, how far men had fallen short of it, and how they came to miss it. He had an instantaneous perception of the quantity of truth or good in any given system; and of the analogy of any given result or principle to others of the same kind scattered through nature or history. His observations take in a larger range, have more profundity from the fineness of his tact, and more comprehension from the extent of his knowledge, along the line of which his imagination ran with equal celerity and certainty, than any other person's, whose writings I know. He however seized upon these results, rather by intuition than by inference: he knew them in their mixed modes, and combined effects rather than by abstraction or analysis, as he explains them to others, not by resolving them into their component parts and elementary principles, so much as by illustrations drawn from other things operating in like manner, and producing similar results; or as he himself has finely expressed it, 'by the same footsteps of nature treading or printing upon several subjects or matters.' He had great sagacity of observation, solidity of judgment and scope of fancy; in this resembling Plato and Burke, that he was a popular philosopher and a philosophical declaimer. His writings have the gravity of prose with the fervour and vividness of poetry. His sayings have the effect of axioms, are at once striking and self-evident. He views objects from the greatest height, and his reflections acquire a sublimity in proportion to their profundity, as in deep wells of water we see the sparkling of the highest fixed stars. The chain of thought reaches to the centre, and ascends the brightest heaven of invention. Reason in him works like an instinct: and his slightest suggestions carry the force of conviction. His opinions are judicial. His induction of particulars is alike wonderful for learning and vivacity, for curiosity and dignity, and an all-pervading intellect binds the whole together in a graceful and pleasing form. His style is equally sharp and sweet,

flowing and pithy, condensed and expansive, expressing volumes in a sentence, or amplifying a single thought into pages of rich, glowing, and delightful eloquence. He had great liberality from seeing the various aspects of things (there was nothing bigotted or intolerant or exclusive about him) and yet he had firmness and decision from feeling their weight and consequences. His character was then an amazing insight into the limits of human knowledge and acquaintance with the landmarks of human intellect, so as to trace its past history or point out the path to future enquirers, but when he quits the ground of contemplation of what others have done or left undone to project himself into future discoveries, he becomes quaint and fantastic, instead of original. His strength was in reflection, not in production: he was the surveyor, not the builder of the fabric of science. He had not strictly the constructive faculty. He was the principal pioneer in the march of modern philosophy, and has completed the education and discipline of the mind for the acquisition of truth, by explaining all the impediments or furtherances that can be applied to it or cleared out of its way. In a word, he was one of the greatest men this country has to boast, and his name deserves to stand, where it is generally placed, by the side of those of our greatest writers, whether we consider the variety, the strength or splendour of his faculties, for ornament or use.

His Advancement of Learning is his greatest work; and next to that, I like the Essays; for the Novum Organum is more laboured and less effectual than it might be. I shall give a few instances from the first of these chiefly, to explain the scope of the above remarks.

The Advancement of Learning is dedicated to James I. and he there observes, with a mixture of truth and flattery, which looks very much like a bold irony,

'I am well assured that this which I shall say is no amplification at all, but a positive and measured truth; which is, that there hath not been, since Christ's time, any king or temporal monarch, which hath been so learned in all literature and erudition, divine and human (as your majesty). For let a man seriously and diligently revolve and peruse the succession of the Emperours of Rome, of which Cæsar the Dictator, who lived some years before Christ, and Marcus Antoninus were the best-learned; and so descend to the Emperours of Grecia, or of the West, and then to the lines of France, Spain, England, Scotland, and the rest, and he shall find his judgment is truly made. For it seemeth much in a king, if by the compendious extractions of other men's wits and labour, he can take hold of any superficial ornaments and shews of learning, or if he countenance and prefer learning and learned men: but to drink indeed of the true fountain of learning, nay, to have such a fountain of learning in himself, in a king, and in a king born, is almost a miracle.'

To any one less wrapped up in self-sufficiency than James, the rule would have been more staggering than the exception could have been gratifying. But Bacon was a sort of prose-laureat to the reigning prince, and his loyalty had never been suspected.

In recommending learned men as fit counsellors in a state, he thus points out the deficiencies of the mere empiric or man of business in not being provided against uncommon emergencies.—'Neither,' he says, 'can the experience of one man's life furnish examples and precedents for the events of one man's life. For as it happeneth sometimes, that the grand-child, or other descendant, resembleth the ancestor more than the son: so many times occurrences of present times may sort better with ancient examples, than with those of the latter or immediate times; and lastly, the wit of one man can no more countervail learning, than one man's means can hold way with a common purse.'—This is finely put. It might be added, on the other hand, by way of caution, that neither can the wit or opinion of one learned man set itself up, as it sometimes does, in opposition to the common sense or experience of mankind.

When he goes on to vindicate the superiority of the scholar over the mere politician in disinterestedness and inflexibility of principle, by arguing ingeniously enough—'The corrupter sort of mere politiques, that have not their thoughts established by learning in the love and apprehension of duty, nor never look abroad into universality, do refer all things to themselves, and thrust themselves into the centre of the world, as if all times should meet in them and their fortunes, never caring in all tempests what becomes of the ship of estates, so they may save themselves in the cock-boat of their own fortune, whereas men that feel the weight of duty, and know the limits of self-love, use to make good their places and duties, though with peril'—I can only wish that the practice were as constant as the theory is plausible, or that the time gave evidence of as much stability and sincerity of principle in well-educated minds as it does of versatility and gross egotism in self-taught men. I need not give the instances, 'they will receive' (in our author's phrase) 'an open allowance:' but I am afraid that neither habits of abstraction nor the want of them will entirely exempt men from a bias to their own interest; that it is neither learning nor ignorance that thrusts us into the centre of our own little world, but that it is nature that has put a man there!

His character of the school-men is perhaps the finest philosophical sketch that ever was drawn. After observing that there are 'two marks and badges of suspected and falsified science; the one, the novelty or strangeness of terms, the other the strictness of positions,

which of necessity doth induce oppositions, and so questions and altercations'—he proceeds—'Surely like as many substances in nature which are solid, do putrify and corrupt into worms: so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrify and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may term them) *vermiculate* questions: which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality. This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign amongst the school-men, who having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowing little history, either of nature or time, did out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning, which are extant in their books. For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby: but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.'

And a little further on, he adds—'Notwithstanding, certain it is, that if those school-men to their great thirst of truth and unwearied travel of wit, had joined variety and universality of reading and contemplation, they had proved excellent lights, to the great advancement of all learning and knowledge; but as they are, they are great undertakers indeed, and fierce with dark keeping. But as in the inquiry of the divine truth, their pride inclined to leave the oracle of God's word, and to varnish in the mixture of their own inventions; so in the inquisition of nature, they ever left the oracle of God's works, and adored the deceiving and deformed images, which the unequal mirror of their own minds, or a few received authors or principles did represent unto them.'

One of his acutest (I might have said profoundest) remarks relates to the near connection between deceiving and being deceived. Volumes might be written in explanation of it. 'This vice therefore,' he says, 'brancheth itself into two sorts; delight in deceiving, and aptness to be deceived, imposture and credulity; which although they appear to be of a diverse nature, the one seeming to proceed of cunning, and the other of simplicity, yet certainly they do for the most part concur. For as the verse noteth *Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est;* an inquisitive man is a prattler: so upon the like reason, a credulous man is a deceiver; as we see it in fame, that he

that will easily believe rumours, will as easily augment rumours, and add somewhat to them of his own, which Tacitus wisely noteth, when he saith, *Fingunt simul creduntque*, so great an affinity hath fiction and belief.'

I proceed to his account of the causes of error, and directions for the conduct of the understanding, which are admirable both for their speculative ingenuity and practical use.

'The first of these,' says Lord Bacon, 'is the extreme affection of two extremities; the one antiquity, the other novelty, wherein it seemeth the children of time do take after the nature and malice of the father. For as he devoureth his children; so one of them seeketh to devour and suppress the other; while antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and novelty cannot be content to add, but it must deface. Surely, the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this respect, *state super vias antiquas, et videte quænam sit via recta et bona, et ambulate in ea.* Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way, but when the discovery is well taken, then to take progression. And to speak truly,' he adds, '*Antiquitas seculi juventus mundi.* These times are the ancient times when the world is ancient; and not those which we count ancient *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backwards from ourselves.

'Another error induced by the former, is a distrust that any thing should be now to be found out which the world should have missed and passed over so long time, as if the same objection were to be made to time that Lucian makes to Jupiter and other the Heathen Gods, of which he wondereth that they begot so many children in old age, and begot none in his time, and asketh whether they were become septuagenary, or whether the law *Papia* made against old men's marriages had restrained them. So it seemeth men doubt, lest time was become past children and generation: wherein contrary-wise, we see commonly the levity and unconstancy of men's judgments, which till a matter be done, wonder that it can be done, and as soon as it is done, wonder again that it was done no sooner, as we see in the expedition of Alexander into Asia, which at first was prejudged as a vast and impossible enterprise, and yet afterwards it pleaseth Livy to make no more of it than this, *nil aliud quam bene ausus vana contemnere.* And the same happened to Columbus in his western navigation. But in intellectual matters, it is much more common; as may be seen in most of the propositions in Euclid, which till they be demonstrate, they seem strange to our assent, but being demonstrate, our mind accepteth of them by a kind of relation (as the lawyers speak) as if we had known them before.

'Another is an impatience of doubt and haste to assertion without due and mature suspension of judgment. For the two ways of contemplation are not unlike the two ways of action, commonly spoken of by the Ancients. The one plain and smooth in the beginning, and in the end impassable: the other rough and troublesome in the entrance, but after a while fair and even; so it is in contemplation, if a man will begin with

certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

'Another error is in the manner of the tradition or delivery of knowledge, which is for the most part magistral and peremptory, and not ingenuous and faithful; in a sort, as may be soonest believed, and not easiliest examined. It is true, that in compendious treatises for practice, that form is not to be disallowed. But in the true handling of knowledge, men ought not to fall either on the one side into the vein of Velleius the Epicurean; *nil tam metuens quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videretur*: nor on the other side, into Socrates his ironical doubting of all things, but to propound things sincerely, with more or less asseveration; as they stand in a man's own judgment, proved more or less.'

Lord Bacon in this part declares, 'that it is not his purpose to enter into a laudative of learning or to make a Hymn to the Muses,' yet he has gone near to do this in the following observations on the dignity of knowledge. He says, after speaking of rulers and conquerors:

'But the commandment of knowledge is yet higher than the commandment over the will; for it is a commandment over the reason, belief, and understanding of man, which is the highest part of the mind, and giveth law to the will itself. For there is no power on earth which setteth a throne or chair of estate in the spirits and souls of men, and in their cogitations, imaginations, opinions, and beliefs, but knowledge and learning. And therefore we see the detestable and extreme pleasure that archheretics and false prophets and impostors are transported with, when they once find in themselves that they have a superiority in the faith and conscience of men: so great, as if they have once tasted of it, it is seldom seen that any torture or persecution can make them relinquish or abandon it. But as this is that which the author of the Revelations calls the depth or profoundness of Satan; so by argument of contraries, the just and lawful sovereignty over men's understanding, by force of truth rightly interpreted, is that which approacheth nearest to the similitude of the Divine Rule. . . . Let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is immortality or continuance: for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families; to this tendeth buildings, foundations, and monuments; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration, and in effect, the strength of all other humane desires; we see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years and more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, no, nor of the kings, or great personages of much later years. For the originals cannot last; and the copies cannot but lose of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledge remain in books, exempted from the wrong of

time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages. So that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how much more are letters to be magnified, which as ships, pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions the one of the other?'

Passages of equal force and beauty might be quoted from almost every page of this work and of the Essays.

Sir Thomas Brown and Bishop Taylor were two prose-writers in the succeeding age, who, for pomp and copiousness of style, might be compared to Lord Bacon. In all other respects they were opposed to him and to one another.—As Bacon seemed to bend all his thoughts to the practice of life, and to bring home the light of science to 'the bosoms and businesses of men,' Sir Thomas Brown seemed to be of opinion that the only business of life, was to think, and that the proper object of speculation was, by darkening knowledge, to breed more speculation, and 'find no end in wandering mazes lost.' He chose the incomprehensible and impracticable as almost the only subjects fit for a lofty and lasting contemplation, or for the exercise of a solid faith. He cried out for an *oh altitudo* beyond the heights of revelation, and posed himself with apocryphal mysteries, as the pastime of his leisure hours. He pushes a question to the utmost verge of conjecture, that he may repose on the certainty of doubt; and he removes an object to the greatest distance from him, that he may take a high and abstracted interest in it, consider it in its relation to the sum of things, not to himself, and bewilder his understanding in the universality of its nature and the inscrutableness of its origin. His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of paste-board. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets. The Antipodes are next-door neighbours to him, and Dooms-day is not far off. With a thought he embraces both the poles; the march of his pen is over the great divisions of geography and chronology. Nothing touches him nearer than humanity. He feels that he is mortal only in the decay of nature, and the dust of long forgotten tombs. The finite is lost in the infinite. The orbits of the heavenly bodies or the history of empires are to him but a point in time or a speck in the universe. The great Platonic year revolves in one of his periods. Nature is too little for the grasp of his style. He

scoops an antithesis out of fabulous antiquity, and rakes up an epithet from the sweepings of Chaos. It is as if his books had dropt from the clouds, or as if Friar Bacon's head could speak. He stands on the edge of the world of sense and reason, and gains a vertigo by looking down at impossibilities and chimeras. Or he busies himself with the mysteries of the Cabbala, or the enclosed secrets of the heavenly quincunxes, as children are amused with tales of the nursery. The passion of curiosity (the only passion of childhood) had in him survived to old age, and had superannuated his other faculties. He moralizes and grows pathetic on a mere idle fancy of his own, as if thought and being were the same, or as if 'all this world were one glorious lie.' For a thing to have ever had a name is sufficient warrant to entitle it to respectful belief, and to invest it with all the rights of a subject and its predicates. He is superstitious, but not bigotted: to him all religions are much the same, and he says that he should not like to have lived in the time of Christ and the Apostles, as it would have rendered his faith too gross and palpable. —His gossipping egotism and personal character have been preferred unjustly to Montaigne's. He had no personal character at all but the peculiarity of resolving all the other elements of his being into thought, and of trying experiments on his own nature in an exhausted receiver of idle and unsatisfactory speculations. All that he 'differences himself by,' to use his own expression, is this moral and physical indifference. In describing himself, he deals only in negatives. He says he has neither prejudices nor antipathies to manners, habits, climate, food, to persons or things; they were alike acceptable to him as they afforded new topics for reflection; and he even professes that he could never bring himself heartily to hate the Devil. He owns in one place of the *Religio Medici*, that 'he could be content if the species were continued like trees,' and yet he declares that this was from no aversion to love, or beauty, or harmony; and the reasons he assigns to prove the orthodoxy of his taste in this respect, is, that he was an admirer of the music of the spheres! He tells us that he often composed a comedy in his sleep. It would be curious to know the subject or the texture of the plot. It must have been something like Nabbes's Mask of Microcosmus, of which the *dramatis personæ* have been already given; or else a misnomer, like Dante's Divine Comedy of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. He was twice married, as if to shew his disregard even for his own theory; and he had a hand in the execution of some old women for witchcraft, I suppose, to keep a decorum in absurdity, and to indulge an agreeable horror at his own fantastical reveries on the occasion. In a word, his mind seemed

to converse chiefly with the intelligible forms, the spectral apparitions of things, he delighted in the preternatural and visionary, and he only existed at the circumference of his nature. He had the most intense consciousness of contradictions and non-entities, and he decks them out in the pride and pedantry of words as if they were the attire of his proper person: the categories hang about his neck like the gold chain of knighthood, and he 'walks gowned' in the intricate folds and swelling drapery of dark sayings and impenetrable riddles!

I will give one gorgeous passage to illustrate all this, from his Urn-Burial, or Hydriotaphia. He digs up the urns of some ancient Druids with the same ceremony and devotion as if they had contained the hallowed relics of his dearest friends; and certainly we feel (as it has been said) the freshness of the mould, and the breath of mortality, in the spirit and force of his style. The conclusion of this singular and unparalleled performance is as follows:

'What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture. What time the persons of these Ossuaries entered the famous nations of the dead, and slept with princes and counsellors, might admit a wide solution. But who were the proprietors of these bones, or what bodies these ashes made up, were a question above antiquarianism: not to be resolved by man, nor easily perhaps by spirits, except we consult the provincial guardians, or tutelary observators. Had they made as good provision for their names, as they have done for their reliques, they had not so grossly erred in the art of perpetuation. But to subsist in bones, and be but pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration. Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves, a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as emblems of mortal vanities; antidotes against pride, vain glory, and madding vices. Pagan vain-glories, which thought the world might last for ever, had encouragement for ambition, and finding no Atropos unto the immortality of their names, were never dampt with the necessity of oblivion. Even old ambitions had the advantage of ours, in the attempts of their vain glories, who, acting early, and before the probable meridian of time, have, by this time, found great accomplishment of their designs, whereby the ancient heroes have already outlasted their monuments, and mechanical preservations. But in this latter scene of time we cannot expect such mummies unto our memories, when ambition may fear the prophecy of Elias, and Charles the Fifth can never hope to live within two Methuselah's of Hector.

'And therefore restless inquietude for the diuturnity of our memories unto present considerations, seems a vanity almost out of date, and super-annuated piece of folly. We cannot hope to live so long in our names as some have done in their persons: one face of Janus holds no proportion unto the other. 'Tis too late to be ambitious. The great mutations of the world are acted, or time may be too short for our designs. To extend

our memories by monuments, whose death we daily pray for, and whose duration we cannot hope, without injury to our expectations in the advent of the last day, were a contradiction to our beliefs. We whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from such imaginations. And being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excuseably decline the consideration of that duration, which maketh pyramids pillars of snow, and all that 's past a moment.

'Circles and right lines limit and close all bodies, and the mortal right-lined circle, must conclude and shut up all. There is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporally considereth all things; our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors. Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years: generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks. To be read by bare inscriptions like many in Gruter, to hope for eternity by enigmatical epithets, or first letters of our names, to be studied by antiquaries, who we were, and have new names given us like many of the mummies, are cold consolations unto the students of perpetuity, even by everlasting languages.

'To be content that times to come should only know there was such a man, not caring whether they knew more of him, was a frigid ambition in Cardan: disparaging his horoscopal inclination and judgment of himself, who cares to subsist like Hippocrates' patients, or Achilles' horses in Homer, under naked nominations without deserts and noble acts, which are the balsam of our memories, the Entelechia and soul of our subsistences. To be nameless in worthy deeds exceeds an infamous history. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name, than Herodias with one. And who had not rather have been the good thief, than Pilate?

'But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it; time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal durations: and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon, without the favour of the everlasting register. Who knows whether the best of men be known? or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

'Oblivion is not to be hired: the greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story, and the recorded names ever since, contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto that current arithmetic, which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt

whether thus to live, were to die: since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old itself, bids us hope no long duration: diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

'Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory, a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities, miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision in nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days, and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. A great part of antiquity contented their hopes of subsistency with a transmigration of their souls. A good way to continue their memories, while having the advantage of plural successions, they could not but act something remarkable in such variety of beings, and enjoying the fame of their passed selves, make accumulation of glory unto their last durations. Others, rather than be lost in the uncomfortable night of nothing, were content to recede into the common being, and make one particle of the public soul of all things, which was no more than to return into their unknown and divine original again. Egyptian ingenuity was more unsatisfied, conserving their bodies in sweet consistences, to attend the return of their souls. But all was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.

'In vain do individuals hope for immortality, or any patent from oblivion, in preservations below the moon: Men have been deceived even in their flatteries above the sun, and studied conceits to perpetuate their names in heaven. The various cosmography of that part hath already varied the names of contrived constellations; Nimrod is lost in Orion, and Osyris in the Dog-star. While we look for incorruption in the heavens, we find they are but like the earth; durable in their main bodies, alterable in their parts: whereof beside comets and new stars, perspectives begin to tell tales. And the spots that wander about the sun, with Phaeton's favour, would make clear conviction.

'There is nothing immortal, but immortality; whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. All others have a dependent being, and within the reach of destruction, which is the peculiar of that necessary essence that cannot destroy itself; and the highest strain of omnipotency to be so powerfully constituted, as not to suffer even from the power of itself. But the sufficiency of Christian immortality frustrates all earthly glory, and the quality of either state after death, makes a folly of posthumous memory. God who can only destroy our souls, and hath assured our resurrection, either of our bodies or names hath directly promised no duration. Wherein there is so much of chance, that the

boldest expectants have found unhappy frustration; and to hold long subsistence, seems but a scape in oblivion. But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing Nativities and Deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery, in the infamy of his nature.

'Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us. A small fire sufficeth for life, great flames seemed too little after death, while men vainly affected precious pyres, and to burn like Sardanapalus; but the wisdom of funeral laws found the folly of prodigal blazes, and reduced undoing fires unto the rule of sober obsequies, wherein few could be so mean as not to provide wood, pitch, a mourner, and an urn.

'Five languages secured not the epitaph of Gordianus; the man of God lives longer without a tomb than any by one, invisibly interred by Angels, and adjudged to obscurity, though not without some marks directing humane discovery. Enoch and Elias without either tomb or burial, in an anomalous state of being, are the great examples of perpetuity, in their long and living memory, in strict account being still on this side death, and having a late part yet to act on this stage of earth. If in the decretory term of the world we shall not all die but be changed, according to received translation; the last day will make but few graves; at least quick resurrections will anticipate lasting sepultures; some graves will be opened before they be quite closed, and Lazarus be no wonder. When many that feared to die shall groan that they can die but once, the dismal state is the second and living death, when life puts despair on the damned; when men shall wish the covering of mountains, not of monuments, and annihilation shall be courted.

'While some have studied monuments, others have studiously declined them: and some have been so vainly boisterous, that they durst not acknowledge their graves; wherein Alaricus seems most subtle, who had a river turned to hide his bones at the bottom. Even Sylla that thought himself safe in his urn, could not prevent revenging tongues, and stones thrown at his monument. Happy are they whom privacy makes innocent, who deal so with men in this world, that they are not afraid to meet them in the next, who when they die, make no commotion among the dead, and are not touched with that poetical taunt of Isaiah.

'Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain-glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity, unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in angles of contingency.

'Pious spirits who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world, than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their fore-beings. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, extasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.

CHARACTER OF SIR T. BROWN AS A WRITER

'To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names, and prædicament of Chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysicks of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves, which being not only an hope but an evidence in noble believers: 'tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's church-yard, as in the sands of Egypt: ready to be any thing, in the extasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as the moles of Adrianus.'

I subjoin the following account of this extraordinary writer's style, said to be written in a blank leaf of his works by Mr. Coleridge.

'Sir Thomas Brown is among my first favourites. Rich in various knowledge, exuberant in conceptions and conceits; contemplative, imaginative, often truly great and magnificent in his style and diction, though, doubtless, too often big, stiff, and *hyperlatinistic*: thus I might, without admixture of falshood, describe Sir T. Brown; and my description would have this fault only, that it would be equally, or almost equally, applicable to half a dozen other writers, from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth to the end of the reign of Charles the Second. He is indeed all this; and what he has more than all this, and peculiar to himself, I seem to convey to my own mind in some measure, by saying, that he is a quiet and sublime *enthusiast*, with a strong tinge of the *fantast*; the humourist constantly mingling with, and flashing across the philosopher, as the darting colours in shot silk play upon the main dye. In short, he has brains in his head, which is all the more interesting for a little twist in the brains. He sometimes reminds the reader of Montaigne; but from no other than the general circumstance of an egotism common to both, which, in Montaigne, is too often a mere amusing gossip, a chit-chat story of whims and peculiarities that lead to nothing; but which, in Sir Thomas Brown, is always the result of a feeling heart, conjoined with a mind of active curiosity, the natural and becoming egotism of a man, who, loving other men as himself, gains the habit and the privilege of talking about himself as familiarly as about other men. Fond of the curious, and a hunter of oddities and strangenesses, while he conceives himself with quaint and humorous gravity, an useful inquirer into physical truths and fundamental science, he loved to contemplate and discuss his own thoughts and feelings, because he found by comparison with other men's, that *they*, too, were curiosities; and so, with a perfectly graceful interesting ease, he put *them*, too, into his museum and cabinet of rarities. In very truth, he was not mistaken, so completely does he see every thing in a light of his own; reading nature neither by sun, moon, or candle-light, but by the light of the fairy glory around his own head;

innumerable dew-drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter. He does not dig his way underground, but slides upon ice, borne on the winged car of fancy. The dancing light he throws upon objects is like an Aurora Borealis, playing betwixt heaven and earth—

> 'Where pure Niemi's faery banks arise,
> And fringed with roses Tenglio rolls its stream.'

His exhortations to piety and virtue are a gay *memento mori*. He mixes up death's-heads and amaranthine flowers; makes life a procession to the grave, but crowns it with gaudy garlands, and 'rains sacrificial roses' on its path. In a word, his writings are more like fine poetry than any other prose whatever; they are a choral song in praise of virtue, and a hymn to the Spirit of the Universe. I shall give a few passages, to shew how feeble and inefficient this praise is.

The Holy Dying begins in this manner:

'A man is a bubble. He is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness; some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad, and very sorrowful. Others ride longer in the storm; it may be until seven years of vanity be expired, and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads, and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death and darkness of the grave to hide them. But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, of a careless nurse, of drowning in a pail of water, of being over-laid by a sleepy servant, or such little accidents, then the young man dances like a bubble empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck, or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colours are phantastical; and so he dances out the gaiety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill-placed humour; and to preserve a man alive in the midst of so many chances and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him; to preserve him from rushing into nothing, and at first to draw him up from nothing, were equally the issues of an Almighty power.'

Another instance of the same rich continuity of feeling and transparent brilliancy in working out an idea, is to be found in his description of the dawn and progress of reason.

'Some are called *at age* at fourteen, some at one and twenty, some never; but all men late enough; for the life of a man comes upon him slowly and insensibly. But as when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of

darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to mattins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses, when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shews a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly: so is a man's reason and his life.'

This passage puts one in mind of the rising dawn and kindling skies in one of Claude's landscapes. Sir Thomas Brown has nothing of this rich finishing and exact gradation. The genius of the two men differed, as that of the painter from the mathematician. The one measures objects, the other copies them. The one shews that things are nothing out of themselves, or in relation to the whole: the one, what they are in themselves, and in relation to us. Or the one may be said to apply the telescope of the mind to distant bodies; the other looks at nature in its infinite minuteness and glossy splendour through a solar microscope.

In speaking of Death, our author's style assumes the port and withering smile of the King of Terrors. The following are scattered passages on this subject.

'It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday or a maid servant to-day; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men, and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the latter does not make him unable to die.' . . . . . .

'I have read of a fair young German gentleman, who, while living, often refused to be pictured, but put off the importunity of his friends' desire by giving way that after a few days' burial, they might send a painter to his vault, and if they saw cause for it, draw the image of his death *unto the life*. They did so, and found his face half-eaten, and his midriff and back-bone full of serpents; and so he stands pictured among his armed ancestors.' . . .

'It is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us, who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five and twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as the lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age, it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. So does the

fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you and me; and then what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave? What friends to visit us? What officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funerals?'

'A man may read a sermon, the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escurial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more: and where our kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsires' head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like Gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the heights of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world that when we die, our ashes shall be equal to kings, and our accounts easier, and our pains for our crimes shall be less.[1] To my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death is summed up in these words: "Ninus the Assyrian had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian sea; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi; nor touched his God with the sacred rod according to the laws: he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the deity, nor

[1] The above passage is an inimitably fine paraphrase of some lines on the tombs in Westminster Abbey by F. Beaumont. It shows how near Jeremy Taylor's style was to poetry, and how well it weaves in with it.

'Mortality, behold, and fear,
What a charge of flesh is here!
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones:
Here they lie, had realms and lands,
Who now want strength to stir their hands.
Where from their pulpits seal'd in dust,
They preach "In greatness is no trust."
Here 's an acre sown indeed
With the richest, royal'st seed
That the earth did e'er suck in,
Since the first man died for sin.
Here the bones of birth have cried,
Though Gods they were, as men they died.
Here are sands, ignoble things,
Dropp'd from the ruin'd sides of kings.
Here 's a world of pomp and state
Buried in dust, once dead by fate.'

administered justice, nor spake to the people; nor numbered them: but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead: behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust is all my portion: the wealth with which I was blessed, my enemies meeting together shall carry away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to hell: and when I went thither, I neither carried gold nor horse, nor silver chariot. I that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust."'

He who wrote in this manner also wore a mitre, and is now a heap of dust; but when the name of Jeremy Taylor is no longer remembered with reverence, genius will have become a mockery, and virtue an empty shade!

LECTURE VIII

ON THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LITERATURE—ON THE GERMAN DRAMA, CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

Before I proceed to the more immediate subject of the present Lecture, I wish to say a few words of one or two writers in our own time, who have imbibed the spirit and imitated the language of our elder dramatists. Among these I may reckon the ingenious author of the Apostate and Evadne, who in the last-mentioned play, in particular, has availed himself with much judgment and spirit of the tragedy of the Traitor by old Shirley. It would be curious to hear the opinion of a professed admirer of the Ancients, and captious despiser of the Moderns, with respect to this production, before he knew it was a copy of an old play. Shirley himself lived in the time of Charles I. and died in the beginning of Charles II.[1]; but he had formed his style on that of the preceding age, and had written the greatest number of his plays in conjunction with Jonson, Deckar, and Massinger. He was 'the last of those fair clouds that on the bosom of bright honour sailed in long procession, calm and beautiful.' The name of Mr. Tobin is familiar to every lover of the drama. His Honey-Moon is evidently founded on The Taming of a Shrew, and Duke Aranza has been pronounced by a polite critic to be 'an elegant Petruchio.' The plot is taken from Shakespear; but the language and sentiments, both of this play and of the Curfew, bear a more direct resemblance to

[1] He and his wife both died from fright, occasioned by the great fire of London in 1665, and lie buried in St. Giles's church-yard.

the flowery tenderness of Beaumont and Fletcher, who were, I believe, the favourite study of our author. Mr. Lamb's John Woodvil may be considered as a dramatic fragment, intended for the closet rather than the stage. It would sound oddly in the lobbies of either theatre, amidst the noise and glare and bustle of resort; but 'there where we have treasured up our hearts,' in silence and in solitude, it may claim and find a place for itself. It might be read with advantage in the still retreats of Sherwood Forest, where it would throw a new-born light on the green, sunny glades; the tenderest flower might seem to drink of the poet's spirit, and 'the tall deer that paints a dancing shadow of his horns in the swift brook,' might seem to do so in mockery of the poet's thought. Mr. Lamb, with a modesty often attendant on fine feeling, has loitered too long in the humbler avenues leading to the temple of ancient genius, instead of marching boldly up to the sanctuary, as many with half his pretensions would have done: 'but fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.' The defective or objectionable parts of this production are imitations of the defects of the old writers: its beauties are his own, though in their manner. The touches of thought and passion are often as pure and delicate as they are profound; and the character of his heroine Margaret is perhaps the finest and most genuine female character out of Shakespear. This tragedy was not critic-proof: it had its cracks and flaws and breaches, through which the enemy marched in triumphant. The station which he had chosen was not indeed a walled town, but a straggling village, which the experienced engineers proceeded to lay waste; and he is pinned down in more than one Review of the day, as an exemplary warning to indiscreet writers, who venture beyond the pale of periodical taste and conventional criticism. Mr. Lamb was thus hindered by the taste of the polite vulgar from writing as he wished; his own taste would not allow him to write like them: and he (perhaps wisely) turned critic and prose-writer in his own defence. To say that he has written better about Shakespear, and about Hogarth, than any body else, is saying little in his praise.—A gentleman of the name of Cornwall, who has lately published a volume of Dramatic Scenes, has met with a very different reception, but I cannot say that he has *deserved* it. He has made no sacrifice at the shrine of fashionable affectation or false glitter. There is nothing common-place in his style to soothe the complacency of dulness, nothing extravagant to startle the grossness of ignorance. He writes with simplicity, delicacy, and fervour; continues a scene from Shakespear, or works out a hint from Boccacio in the spirit of his originals, and though he bows with reverence at the altar of those great masters, he keeps an eye curiously

intent on nature, and a mind awake to the admonitions of his own heart. As he has begun, so let him proceed. Any one who will turn to the glowing and richly-coloured conclusion of the Falcon, will, I think, agree with me in this wish!

There are four sorts or schools of tragedy with which I am acquainted. The first is the antique or classical. This consisted, I apprehend, in the introduction of persons on the stage, speaking, feeling, and acting *according to nature*, that is, according to the impression of given circumstances on the passions and mind of man in those circumstances, but limited by the physical conditions of time and place, as to its external form, and to a certain dignity of attitude and expression, selection in the figures, and unity in their grouping, as in a statue or bas-relief. The second is the Gothic or romantic, or as it might be called, the historical or poetical tragedy, and differs from the former, only in having a larger scope in the design and boldness in the execution; that is, it is the dramatic representation of nature and passion emancipated from the precise imitation of an actual event in place and time, from the same fastidiousness in the choice of the materials, and with the license of the epic and fanciful form added to it in the range of the subject and the decorations of language. This is particularly the style or school of Shakespear and of the best writers of the age of Elizabeth, and the one immediately following. Of this class, or genus, the *tragedie bourgeoise* is a variety, and the antithesis of the classical form. The third sort is the French or common-place rhetorical style, which is founded on the antique as to its form and subject-matter; but instead of individual nature, real passion, or imagination growing out of real passion and the circumstances of the speaker, it deals only in vague, imposing, and laboured declamations, or descriptions of nature, dissertations on the passions, and pompous flourishes which never entered any head but the author's, have no existence in nature which they pretend to identify, and are not dramatic at all, but purely didactic. The fourth and last is the German or paradoxical style, which differs from the others in representing men as acting not from the impulse of feeling, or as debating common-place questions of morality, but as the organs and mouth-pieces (that is, as acting, speaking, and thinking, under the sole influence) of certain extravagant speculative opinions, abstracted from all existing customs, prejudices and institutions.—It is my present business to speak chiefly of the first and last of these.

Sophocles differs from Shakespear as a Doric portico does from Westminster Abbey. The principle of the one is simplicity and harmony, of the other richness and power. The one relies on form or proportion, the other on quantity and variety and prominence of

parts. The one owes its charm to a certain union and regularity of feeling, the other adds to its effects from complexity and the combination of the greatest extremes. The classical appeals to sense and habit: the Gothic or romantic strikes from novelty, strangeness and contrast. Both are founded in essential and indestructible principles of human nature. We may prefer the one to the other, as we chuse, but to set up an arbitrary and bigotted standard of excellence in consequence of this preference, and to exclude either one or the other from poetry or art, is to deny the existence of the first principles of the human mind, and to war with nature, which is the height of weakness and arrogance at once.—There are some observations on this subject in a late number of the Edinburgh Review, from which I shall here make a pretty long extract.

'The most obvious distinction between the two styles, the classical and the romantic, is, that the one is conversant with objects that are grand or beautiful in themselves, or in consequence of obvious and universal associations; the other, with those that are interesting only by the force of circumstances and imagination. A Grecian temple, for instance, is a classical object: it is beautiful in itself, and excites immediate admiration. But the ruins of a Gothic castle have no beauty or symmetry to attract the eye; and yet they excite a more powerful and romantic interest, from the ideas with which they are habitually associated. If, in addition to this, we are told, that this is Macbeth's castle, the scene of the murder of Duncan, the interest will be instantly heightened to a sort of pleasing horror. The classical idea or form of any thing, it may also be observed, remains always the same, and suggests nearly the same impressions; but the associations of ideas belonging to the romantic character may vary infinitely, and take in the whole range of nature and accident. Antigone, in Sophocles, waiting near the grove of the Furies—Electra, in Æschylus, offering sacrifice at the tomb of Agamemnon—are classical subjects, because the circumstances and the characters have a correspondent dignity, and an immediate interest, from their mere designation. Florimel, in Spenser, where she is described sitting on the ground in the Witch's hut, is not classical, though in the highest degree poetical and romantic: for the incidents and situation are in themselves mean and disagreeable, till they are redeemed by the genius of the poet, and converted, by the very contrast, into a source of the utmost pathos and elevation of sentiment. Othello's handkerchief is not classical, though "there was magic in the web:"—it is only a powerful instrument of passion and imagination. Even Lear is not classical; for he is a poor crazy old man, who has nothing sublime about him but his afflictions, and who dies of a broken heart

'Schlegel somewhere compares the Furies of Æschylus to the Witches of Shakespear—we think without much reason. Perhaps Shakespear has surrounded the Weird Sisters with associations as terrible, and even more mysterious, strange, and fantastic, than the Furies of Æschylus; but the traditionary beings themselves are not so petrific. These are of marble,—their look alone must blast the beholder;—those are of air, bubbles; and though "so withered and so wild in their attire," it is their spells alone which are fatal. They owe their power to metaphysical aid: but the others contain all that is dreadful in their corporal figures. In this we see the distinct spirit of the classical and the romantic mythology. The serpents that twine round the head of the Furies are not to be trifled with, though they implied no preternatural power. The bearded Witches in Macbeth are in themselves grotesque and ludicrous, except as this strange deviation from nature staggers our imagination, and leads us to expect and to believe in all incredible things. They appal the faculties by what they say or do;—the others are intolerable, even to sight.

'Our author is right in affirming, that the true way to understand the plays of Sophocles and Æschylus, is to study them before the groupes of the Niobe or the Laocoon. If we can succeed in explaining this analogy, we shall have solved nearly the whole difficulty. For it is certain, that there are exactly the same powers of mind displayed in the poetry of the Greeks as in their statues. Their poetry is exactly what their sculptors might have written. Both are exquisite imitations of nature; the one in marble, the other in words. It is evident, that the Greek poets had the same perfect idea of the subjects they described, as the Greek sculptors had of the objects they represented; and they give as much of this absolute truth of imitation, as can be given by words. But in this direct and simple imitation of nature, as in describing the form of a beautiful woman, the poet is greatly inferior to the sculptor: it is in the power of illustration, in comparing it to other things, and suggesting other ideas of beauty or love, that he has an entirely new source of imagination opened to him: and of this power, the moderns have made at least a bolder and more frequent use than the ancients. The description of Helen in Homer is a description of what might have happened and been seen, as "that she moved with grace, and that the old men rose up with reverence as she passed;" the description of Belphœbe in Spenser is a description of what was only visible to the eye of the poet.

> "Upon her eyelids many graces sat,
> Under the shadow of her even brows."

The description of the soldiers going to battle in Shakespear, "all plumed like estriches, like eagles newly baited, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls," is too bold, figurative, and profuse of dazzling images, for the mild, equable tone of classical poetry, which never loses sight of the object in the illustration. The ideas of the ancients were too exact and definite, too much attached to the material form or vehicle by which they were conveyed, to admit of those rapid combinations, those unrestrained flights of fancy, which, glancing from heaven to earth, unite the most opposite extremes, and draw the happiest illustrations from things the most remote. The two principles of imitation and imagination, indeed, are not only distinct, but almost opposite.

'The great difference, then, which we find between the classical and the romantic style, between ancient and modern poetry, is, that the one more frequently describes things as they are interesting in themselves,—the other for the sake of the associations of ideas connected with them; that the one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects on the senses—the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination. The one is the poetry of form, the other of effect. The one gives only what is necessarily implied in the subject, the other all that can possibly arise out of it. The one seeks to identify the imitation with the external object,—clings to it,—is inseparable from it,—is either that or nothing; the other seeks to identify the original impression with whatever else, within the range of thought or feeling, can strengthen, relieve, adorn or elevate it. Hence the severity and simplicity of the Greek tragedy, which excluded every thing foreign or unnecessary to the subject. Hence the Unities: for, in order to identify the imitation as much as possible with the reality, and leave nothing to mere imagination, it was necessary to give the same coherence and consistency to the different parts of a story, as to the different limbs of a statue. Hence the beauty and grandeur of their materials; for, deriving their power over the mind from the truth of the imitation, it was necessary that the subject which they made choice of, and from which they could not depart, should be in itself grand and beautiful. Hence the perfection of their execution; which consisted in giving the utmost harmony, delicacy, and refinement to the details of a given subject. Now, the characteristic excellence of the moderns is the reverse of all this. As, according to our author, the poetry of the Greeks is the same as their sculpture; so, he says, our own more nearly resembles painting,—where the artist can relieve and throw back his figures at pleasure,—use a greater variety of contrasts,—and where light and shade, like the colours of fancy, are reflected on the different objects. The Muse of classical poetry should be represented as a beautiful naked

figure: the Muse of modern poetry should be represented clothed, and with wings. The first has the advantage in point of form; the last in colour and motion.

'Perhaps we may trace this difference to something analogous in physical organization, situation, religion, and manners. First, the physical organization of the Greeks seems to have been more perfect, more susceptible of external impressions, and more in harmony with external nature than ours, who have not the same advantages of climate and constitution. Born of a beautiful and vigorous race, with quick senses and a clear understanding, and placed under a mild heaven, they gave the fullest developement to their external faculties: and where all is perceived easily, every thing is perceived in harmony and proportion. It is the stern genius of the North which drives men back upon their own resources, which makes them slow to perceive, and averse to feel, and which, by rendering them insensible to the single, successive impressions of things, requires their collective and combined force to rouse the imagination violently and unequally. It should be remarked, however, that the early poetry of some of the Eastern nations has even more of that irregularity, wild enthusiasm, and disproportioned grandeur, which has been considered as the distinguishing character of the Northern nations.

'Again, a good deal may be attributed to the state of manners and political institutions. The ancient Greeks were warlike tribes encamped in cities. They had no other country than that which was enclosed within the walls of the town in which they lived. Each individual belonged, in the first instance, to the state; and his relations to it were so close, as to take away, in a great measure, all personal independence and free-will. Every one was mortised to his place in society, and had his station assigned him as part of the political machine, which could only subsist by strict subordination and regularity. Every man was, as it were, perpetually on duty, and his faculties kept constant watch and ward. Energy of purpose and intensity of observation became the necessary characteristics of such a state of society; and the general principle communicated itself from this ruling concern for the public, to morals, to art, to language, to every thing.—The tragic poets of Greece were among her best soldiers; and it is no wonder that they were as severe in their poetry as in their discipline. Their swords and their styles carved out their way with equal sharpness.—After all, however, the tragedies of Sophocles, which are the perfection of the classical style, are hardly tragedies in our sense of the word.[1] They do not exhibit the extremity of human passion and suffering. The object of modern

[1] The difference in the tone of moral sentiment is the greatest of all others.

tragedy is to represent the soul utterly subdued as it were, or at least convulsed and overthrown by passion or misfortune. That of the ancients was to shew how the greatest crimes could be perpetrated with the least remorse, and the greatest calamities borne with the least emotion. Firmness of purpose and calmness of sentiment are their leading characteristics. Their heroes and heroines act and suffer as if they were always in the presence of a higher power, or as if human life itself were a religious ceremony, performed in honour of the Gods and of the State. The mind is not shaken to its centre; the whole being is not crushed or broken down. Contradictory motives are not accumulated; the utmost force of imagination and passion is not exhausted to overcome the repugnance of the will to crime; the contrast and combination of outward accidents are not called in to overwhelm the mind with the whole weight of unexpected calamity. The dire conflict of the feelings, the desperate struggle with fortune, are seldom there. All is conducted with a fatal composure; prepared and submitted to with inflexible constancy, as if Nature were only an instrument in the hands of Fate.

'This state of things was afterwards continued under the Roman empire. In the ages of chivalry and romance, which, after a considerable interval, succeeded its dissolution, and which have stamped their character on modern genius and literature, all was reversed. Society was again resolved into its component parts; and the world was, in a manner, to begin anew. The ties which bound the citizen and the soldier to the state being loosened, each person was thrown back into the circle of the domestic affections, or left to pursue his doubtful way to fame and fortune alone. This interval of time might be accordingly supposed to give birth to all that was constant in attachment, adventurous in action, strange, wild, and extravagant in invention. Human life took the shape of a busy, voluptuous dream, where the imagination was now lost amidst "antres vast and deserts idle;" or suddenly transported to stately palaces, echoing with dance and song. In this uncertainty of events, this fluctuation of hopes and fears, all objects became dim, confused, and vague. Magicians, dwarfs, giants, followed in the train of romance; and Orlando's enchanted sword, the horn which he carried with him, and which he blew thrice at Roncesvalles, and Rogero's winged horse, were not sufficient to protect them in their unheard-of encounters, or deliver them from their inextricable difficulties. It was a return to the period of the early heroic ages; but tempered by the difference of domestic manners, and the spirit of religion. The marked difference in the relation of the sexes arose from the freedom of choice in women; which, from being the slaves of the will and passions of

men, converted them into the arbiters of their fate, which introduced the modern system of gallantry, and first made love a feeling of the heart, founded on mutual affection and esteem. The leading virtues of the Christian religion, self-denial and generosity, assisted in producing the same effect.—Hence the spirit of chivalry, of romantic love, and honour!

'The mythology of the romantic poetry differed from the received religion: both differed essentially from the classical. The religion or mythology of the Greeks was nearly allied to their poetry: it was material and definite. The Pagan system reduced the Gods to the human form, and elevated the powers of inanimate nature to the same standard. Statues carved out of the finest marble, represented the objects of their religious worship in airy porticos, in solemn temples, and consecrated groves. Mercury was seen "new-lighted on some heaven-kissing hill;" and the Naiad or Dryad came gracefully forth as the personified genius of the stream or wood. All was subjected to the senses. The Christian religion, on the contrary, is essentially spiritual and abstracted; it is "the evidence of things unseen." In the Heathen mythology, form is every where predominant; in the Christian, we find only unlimited, undefined power. The imagination alone "broods over the immense abyss, and makes it pregnant." There is, in the habitual belief of an universal, invisible principle of all things, a vastness and obscurity which confounds our perceptions, while it exalts our piety. A mysterious awe surrounds the doctrines of the Christian faith: the infinite is everywhere before us, whether we turn to reflect on what is revealed to us of the divine nature or our own.

'History, as well as religion, has contributed to enlarge the bounds of imagination: and both together, by shewing past and future objects at an interminable distance, have accustomed the mind to contemplate and take an interest in the obscure and shadowy. The ancients were more circumscribed within "the ignorant present time,"—spoke only their own language,—were conversant only with their own customs,—were acquainted only with the events of their own history. The mere lapse of time then, aided by the art of printing, has served to accumulate an endless mass of mixed and contradictory materials; and, by extending our knowledge to a greater number of things, has made our particular ideas less perfect and distinct. The constant reference to a former state of manners and literature is a marked feature in modern poetry. We are always talking of the Greeks and Romans;—*they* never said any thing of us. This circumstance has tended to give a certain abstract elevation, and ethereal refinement to the mind, without strengthening it. We are lost in wonder at what has been done, and dare not think of emulating it. The earliest

modern poets, accordingly, may be conceived to hail the glories of the antique world, dawning through the dark abyss of time; while revelation, on the other hand, opened its path to the skies. So Dante represents himself as conducted by Virgil to the shades below; while Beatrice welcomes him to the abodes of the blest.'

The French are the only people in modern Europe, who have professedly imitated the ancients; but from their being utterly unlike the Greeks or Romans, have produced a dramatic style of their own, which is neither classical nor romantic. The same article contains the following censure of this style:

'The true poet identifies the reader with the characters he represents; the French poet only identifies him with himself. There is scarcely a single page of their tragedy which fairly throws nature open to you. It is tragedy in masquerade. We never get beyond conjecture and reasoning—beyond the general impression of the situation of the persons—beyond general reflections on their passions—beyond general descriptions of objects. We never get at that something more, which is what we are in search of, namely, what we ourselves should feel in the same situations. The true poet transports you to the scene—you see and hear what is passing—you catch, from the lips of the persons concerned, what lies nearest to their hearts;—the French poet takes you into his closet, and reads you a lecture upon it. The *chef d'œuvres* of their stage, then, are, at best, only ingenious paraphrases of nature. The dialogue is a tissue of common-places, of laboured declamations on human life, of learned casuistry on the passions, on virtue and vice, which any one else might make just as well as the person speaking; and yet, what the persons themselves would say, is all we want to know, and all for which the poet puts them into those situations.'

After the Restoration, that is, after the return of the exiled family of the Stuarts from France, our writers transplanted this artificial, monotonous, and imposing common-place style into England, by imitations and translations, where it could not be expected to take deep root, and produce wholesome fruits, and where it has indeed given rise to little but turgidity and rant in men of original force of genius, and to insipidity and formality in feebler copyists. Otway is the only writer of this school, who, in the lapse of a century and a half, has produced a tragedy (upon the classic or regular model) of indisputable excellence and lasting interest. The merit of Venice Preserved is not confined to its effect on the stage, or to the opportunity it affords for the display of the powers of the actors in it, of a Jaffier, a Pierre, a Belvidera: it reads as well in the closet, and loses little or none of its power of rivetting breathless attention, and stirring

the deepest yearnings of affection. It has passages of great beauty in themselves (detached from the fable) touches of true nature and pathos, though none equal or indeed comparable to what we meet with in Shakespear and other writers of that day; but the awful suspense of the situations, the conflict of duties and passions, the intimate bonds that unite the characters together, and that are violently rent asunder like the parting of soul and body, the solemn march of the tragical events to the fatal catastrophe that winds up and closes over all, give to this production of Otway's Muse a charm and power that bind it like a spell on the public mind, and have made it a proud and inseparable adjunct of the English stage. Thomson has given it due honour in his feeling verse, when he exclaims,

> 'See o'er the stage the Ghost of Hamlet stalks,
> Othello rages, poor Monimia mourns,
> And Belvidera pours her soul in love.'

There is a mixture of effeminacy, of luxurious and cowardly indulgence of his wayward sensibility, in Jaffier's character, which is, however, finely relieved by the bold intrepid villainy and contemptuous irony of Pierre, while it is excused by the difficulties of his situation, and the loveliness of Belvidera: but in the Orphan there is little else but this voluptuous effeminacy of sentiment and mawkish distress, which strikes directly at the root of that mental fortitude and heroic cast of thought which alone makes tragedy endurable—that renders its sufferings pathetic, or its struggles sublime. Yet there are lines and passages in it of extreme tenderness and beauty; and few persons, I conceive (judging from my own experience) will read it at a certain time of life without shedding tears over it as fast as the 'Arabian trees their medicinal gums.' Otway always touched the reader, for he had himself a heart. We may be sure that he blotted his page often with his tears, on which so many drops have since fallen from glistening eyes, 'that sacred pity had engendered there.' He had susceptibility of feeling and warmth of genius; but he had not equal depth of thought or loftiness of imagination, and indulged his mere sensibility too much, yielding to the immediate impression or emotion excited in his own mind, and not placing himself enough in the minds and situations of others, or following the workings of nature sufficiently with keenness of eye and strength of will into its heights and depths, its strongholds as well as its weak sides. The Orphan was attempted to be revived some time since with the advantage of Miss O'Neill playing the part of Monimia. It however did not entirely succeed (as it appeared at the time) from the plot turning all on one circumstance, and that hardly of a nature

to be obtruded on the public notice. The incidents and characters are taken almost literally from an old play by Robert Tailor, called HOG HATH LOST HIS PEARL.

Addison's Cato, in spite of Dennis's criticism, still retains possession of the stage with all its unities. My love and admiration for Addison is as great as any person's, let that other person be who he will; but it is not founded on his Cato, in extolling which Whigs and Tories contended in loud applause. The interest of this play (bating that shadowy regret that always clings to and flickers round the form of free antiquity) is confined to the declamation, which is feeble in itself, and not heard on the stage. I have seen Mr. Kemble in this part repeat the Soliloquy on Death without a line being distinctly heard; nothing was observable but the thoughtful motion of his lips, and the occasional extension of his hand in sign of doubts suggested or resolved; yet this beautiful and expressive dumb-show, with the propriety of his costume, and the elegance of his attitude and figure, excited the most lively interest, and kept attention even more on the stretch, to catch every imperfect syllable or speaking gesture. There is nothing, however, in the play to excite ridicule, or shock by absurdity, except the love-scenes which are passed over as what the spectator has no proper concern with: and however feeble or languid the interest produced by a dramatic exhibition, unless there is some positive stumbling-block thrown in the way, or gross offence given to an audience, it is generally suffered to linger on to a *euthanasia*, instead of dying a violent and premature death. If an author (particularly an author of high reputation) can contrive to preserve a uniform degree of insipidity, he is nearly sure of impunity. It is the mixture of great faults with splendid passages (the more striking from the contrast) that is inevitable damnation. Every one must have seen the audience tired out and watching for an opportunity to wreak their vengeance on the author, and yet not able to accomplish their wish, because no one part seemed more tiresome or worthless than another. The philosophic mantle of Addison's Cato, when it no longer spreads its graceful folds on the shoulders of John Kemble, will I fear fall to the ground; nor do I think Mr. Kean likely to pick it up again, with dauntless ambition or stoic pride, like that of Coriolanus. He could not play Cato (at least I think not) for the same reason that he will play Coriolanus. He can always play a living man; he cannot play a lifeless statue.

Dryden's plays have not come down to us, except in the collection of his printed works. The last of them that was on the list of regular acting plays was Don Sebastian. The Mask of Arthur and Emmeline was the other day revived at one of our theatres, without

much success. Alexander the Great is by Lee, who wrote some things in conjunction with Dryden, and who had far more power and passion of an irregular and turbulent kind, bordering upon constitutional morbidity, and who might have done better things (as we see from his Œdipus) had not his genius been perverted and rendered worse than abortive by carrying the vicious manner of his age to the greatest excess. Dryden's plays are perhaps the fairest specimen of what this manner was. I do not know how to describe it better than by saying that it is one continued and exaggerated common-place. All the characters are put into a swaggering attitude of dignity, and tricked out in the pomp of ostentatious drapery. The images are extravagant, yet not far-fetched; they are outrageous caricatures of obvious thoughts: the language oscillates between bombast and bathos: the characters are noisy pretenders to virtue, and shallow boasters in vice; the versification is laboured and monotonous, quite unlike the admirably free and flowing rhyme of his satires, in which he felt the true inspiration of his subject, and could find modulated sounds to express it. Dryden had no dramatic genius either in tragedy or comedy. In his plays he mistakes blasphemy for sublimity, and ribaldry for wit. He had so little notion of his own powers, that he has put Milton's Paradise Lost into dramatic rhyme to make Adam look like a fine gentleman; and has added a double love-plot to the Tempest, to 'relieve the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude' of that solitude of the imagination, in which Shakespear had left the inhabitants of his Enchanted Island. I will give two passages out of Don Sebastian in illustration of what I have said above of this mock-heroic style.

Almeyda advising Sebastian to fly from the power of Muley-Moluch addresses him thus:

> 'Leave then the luggage of your fate behind;
> To make your flight more easy, leave Almeyda.
> Nor think me left a base, ignoble prey,
> Exposed to this inhuman tyrant's lust.
> My virtue is a guard beyond my strength;
> And death my last defence within my call.'

Sebastian answers very gravely:

> 'Death may be called in vain, and cannot come:
> Tyrants can tye him up from your relief:
> Nor has a Christian privilege to die.
> Alas, thou art too young in thy new faith:
> Brutus and Cato might discharge their souls,
> And give them furloughs for another world:
> But we, like sentries, are obliged to stand,
> In starless nights, and wait the appointed hour.'

Sebastian then urging her to prevent the tyrant's designs by an instant marriage, she says,

'Tis late to join, when we must part so soon.
Sebastian. Nay, rather let us haste it, e'er we part:
Our souls for want of that acquaintance here
May wander in the starry walks above,
And, forced on worse companions, miss ourselves.'

In the scene with Muley-Moluch where she makes intercession for Sebastian's life, she says,

'My father's, mother's, brother's death I pardon:
That 's somewhat sure, a mighty sum of murder,
Of innocent and kindred blood struck off.
My prayers and penance shall discount for these,
And beg of Heaven to charge the bill on me:
Behold what price I offer, and how dear
To buy Sebastian's life.
Emperor. Let after-reckonings trouble fearful fools;
I 'll stand the trial of those trivial crimes:
But since thou begg'st me to prescribe my terms,
The only I can offer are thy love;
And this one day of respite to resolve.
Grant or deny, for thy next word is Fate;
And Fate is deaf to Prayer.
Almeyda. May heav'n be so
At thy last breath to thine: I curse thee not:
For who can better curse the plague or devil
Than to be what they are? That curse be thine.
Now do not speak, Sebastian, for you need not,
But die, for I resign your life: Look heav'n,
Almeyda dooms her dear Sebastian's death
But is there heaven, for I begin to doubt?
The skies are hush'd; no grumbling thunders roll:
Now take your swing, ye impious: sin, unpunish'd.
Eternal Providence seems over-watch'd,
And with a slumbering nod assents to murder. . . .
Farewell, my lost Sebastian!
I do not beg, I challenge Justice now:
O Powers, if Kings be your peculiar care,
Why plays this wretch with your prerogative?
Now flash him dead, now crumble him to ashes:
Or henceforth live confined in your own palace;
And look not idly out upon a world
That is no longer yours.'

These passages, with many like them, will be found in the first scene of the third act.

The occasional striking expressions, such as that of souls at the

resurrection 'fumbling for their limbs,' are the language of strong satire and habitual disdain, not proper to tragic or serious poetry.

After Dryden there is no writer that has acquired much reputation as a tragic poet for the next hundred years. In the hands of his successors, the Smiths, the Hughes, the Hills, the Murphys, the Dr. Johnsons, of the reigns of George I. and II., tragedy seemed almost afraid to know itself, and certainly did not stand where it had done a hundred and fifty years before. It had degenerated by regular and studied gradations into the most frigid, insipid, and insignificant of all things. It faded to a shade, it tapered to a point, 'fine by degrees, and beautifully less.' I do not believe there is a single play of this period which could be read with any degree of interest or even patience, by a modern reader of poetry, if we except the productions of Southern, Lillo and Moore, the authors of the Gamester, Oroonoko, and Fatal Curiosity, and who instead of mounting on classic stilts and making rhetorical flourishes, went out of the established road to seek for truth and nature and effect in the commonest life and lowest situations. In short, the only tragedy of this period is that to which their productions gave a name, and which has been called in contradistinction by the French, and with an express provision for its merits and defects, the *tragedie bourgeoise*. An anecdote is told of the first of these writers by Gray, in one of his Letters, dated from Horace Walpole's country-seat, about the year 1740, who says, 'Old Mr. Southern is here, who is now above 80: a very agreeable old man, at least I think so when I look in his face, and think of Isabella and Oroonoko.' It is pleasant to see these traits of attachment and gratitude kept up in successive generations of poets to one another, and also to find that the same works of genius that have 'sent us weeping to our beds,' and made us 'rise sadder and wiser on the morrow morn,' have excited just the same fondness of affection in others before we were born; and it is to be hoped, will do so, after we are dead. Our best feelings, and those on which we pride ourselves most, and with most reason, are perhaps the commonest of all others.

Up to the present reign, and during the best part of it (with another solitary exception, Douglas, which with all its feebleness and extravagance, has in its style and sentiments a good deal of poetical and romantic beauty) tragedy wore the face of the Goddess of Dulness in the Dunciad, serene, torpid, sickly, lethargic, and affected, till it was roused from its trance by the blast of the French Revolution, and by the loud trampling of the German Pegasus on the English stage, which now appeared as pawing to get free from its ancient trammels, and rampant shook off the incumbrance of all former examples,

opinions, prejudices, and principles. If we have not been alive and well since this period, at least we have been alive, and it is better to be alive than dead. The German tragedy (and our own, which is only a branch of it) aims at effect, and produces it often in the highest degree; and it does this by going all the lengths not only of instinctive feeling, but of speculative opinion, and startling the hearer by overturning all the established maxims of society, and setting at nought all the received rules of composition. It cannot be said of this style that in it 'decorum is the principal thing.' It is the violation of decorum, that is its first and last principle, the beginning, middle, and end. It is an insult and defiance to Aristotle's definition of tragedy. The action is not grave, but extravagant: the fable is not probable, but improbable: the favourite characters are not only low, but vicious: the sentiments are such as do not become the person into whose mouth they are put, nor that of any other person: the language is a mixture of metaphysical jargon and flaring prose: the moral is immorality. In spite of all this, a German tragedy is a good thing. It is a fine hallucination: it is a noble madness, and as there is a pleasure in madness, which none but madmen know, so there is a pleasure in reading a German play to be found in no other. The world have thought so: they go to see the Stranger, they go to see Lovers' Vows and Pizarro, they have their eyes wide open all the time, and almost cry them out before they come away, and therefore they go again. There is something in the style that hits the temper of men's minds; that, if it does not hold the mirrour up to nature, yet 'shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.' It embodies, it sets off and aggrandizes in all the pomp of action, in all the vehemence of hyperbolical declamation, in scenery, in dress, in music, in the glare of the senses, and the glow of sympathy, the extreme opinions which are floating in our time, and which have struck their roots deep and wide below the surface of the public mind. We are no longer as formerly heroes in warlike enterprise; martyrs to religious faith; but we are all the partisans of a political system, and devotees to some theory of moral sentiments. The modern style of tragedy is not assuredly made up of pompous common-place, but it is a tissue of philosophical, political, and moral paradoxes. I am not saying whether these paradoxes are true or false: all that I mean to state is, that they are utterly at variance with old opinions, with established rules and existing institutions; that it is this tug of war between the inert prejudice and the startling novelty which is to batter it down (first on the stage of the theatre, and afterwards on the stage of the world) that gives the excitement and the zest. We see the natural always pitted against the social

man; and the majority who are not of the privileged classes, take part with the former. The hero is a sort of metaphysical Orson, armed not with teeth and a club, but with hard sayings and unanswerable sentences, ticketted and labelled with extracts and mottos from the modern philosophy. This common representative of mankind is a natural son of some feudal lord, or wealthy baron: and he comes to claim as a matter of course and of simple equity, the rich reversion of the title and estates to which he has a right by the bounty of nature and the privilege of his birth. This produces a very edifying scene, and the proud, unfeeling, unprincipled baron is hooted from the stage. A young woman, a sempstress, or a waiting maid of much beauty and accomplishment, who would not think of matching with a fellow of low birth or fortune for the world, falls in love with the heir of an immense estate out of pure regard to his mind and person, and thinks it strange that rank and opulence do not follow as natural appendages in the train of sentiment. A lady of fashion, wit, and beauty, forfeits the sanctity of her marriage-vow, but preserves the inviolability of her sentiments and character,

'Pure in the last recesses of the mind'—

and triumphs over false opinion and prejudice, like gold out of the fire, the brighter for the ordeal. A young man turns robber and captain of a gang of banditti; and the wonder is to see the heroic ardour of his sentiments, his aspirations after the most godlike goodness and unsullied reputation, working their way through the repulsiveness of his situation, and making use of fortune only as a foil to nature. The principle of contrast and contradiction is here made use of, and no other. All qualities are reversed: virtue is always at odds with vice, 'which shall be which:' the internal character and external situation, the actions and the sentiments, are never in accord: you are to judge of everything by contraries: those that exalt themselves are abased, and those that should be humbled are exalted: the high places and strongholds of power and greatness are crumbled in the dust; opinions totter, feelings are brought into question, and the world is turned upside down, with all things in it!—'There is some soul of goodness in things evil'—and there is some soul of goodness in all this. The world and every thing in it is not just what it ought to be, or what it pretends to be; or such extravagant and prodigious paradoxes would be driven from the stage—would meet with sympathy in no human breast, high or low, young or old. *There's something rotten in the state of Denmark.* Opinion is not truth: appearance is not reality: power is not beneficence: rank is not wisdom: nobility is not the only virtue: riches are not happiness: desert and success

are different things: actions do not always speak the character any more than words. We feel this, and do justice to the romantic extravagance of the German Muse.

In Germany, where this *outré* style of treating every thing established and adventitious was carried to its height, there were, as we learn from the Sorrows of Werter, seven-and-twenty ranks in society, each raised above the other, and of which the one above did not speak to the one below it. Is it wonderful that the poets and philosophers of Germany, the discontented men of talent, who thought and mourned for themselves and their fellows, the Goethes, the Lessings, the Schillers, the Kotzebues, felt a sudden and irresistible impulse by a convulsive effort to tear aside this factitious drapery of society, and to throw off that load of bloated prejudice, of maddening pride and superannuated folly, that pressed down every energy of their nature and stifled the breath of liberty, of truth and genius in their bosoms? These Titans of our days tried to throw off the dead weight that encumbered them, and in so doing, warred not against heaven, but against earth. The same writers (as far as I have seen) have made the only incorrigible Jacobins, and their school of poetry is the only real school of Radical Reform.

In reasoning, truth and soberness may prevail, on which side soever they meet: but in works of imagination novelty has the advantage over prejudice; that which is striking and unheard-of, over that which is trite and known before, and that which gives unlimited scope to the indulgence of the feelings and the passions (whether erroneous or not) over that which imposes a restraint upon them.

I have half trifled with this subject; and I believe I have done so, because I despaired of finding language for some old rooted feelings I have about it, which a theory could neither give or can it take away. The Robbers was the first play I ever read: and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow, and I have not recovered enough from it to describe how it was. There are impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface. Were I to live much longer than I have any chance of doing, the books which I read when I was young, I can never forget. Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of the Robbers, but they have not blotted the impression from my mind: it is here still, an old dweller in the chambers of the brain. The scene in particular in which Moor looks through his tears at the evening sun from the mountain's brow, and says in his despair, 'It was my wish like him to live, like him to die: it was an idle thought, a boy's conceit,' took fast hold of my imagination, and that sun has to me never set! The last interview in Don Carlos between the

two lovers, in which the injured bride struggles to burst the prison-house of her destiny, in which her hopes and youth lie coffined, and buried, as it were, alive, under the oppression of unspeakable anguish, I remember gave me a deep sense of suffering and a strong desire after good, which has haunted me ever since. I do not like Schiller's later style so well. His Wallenstein, which is admirably and almost literally translated by Mr. Coleridge, is stately, thoughtful, and imaginative: but where is the enthusiasm, the throbbing of hope and fear, the mortal struggle between the passions; as if all the happiness or misery of a life were crowded into a moment, and the die was to be cast that instant? Kotzebue's best work I read first in Cumberland's imitation of it in the Wheel of Fortune; and I confess that that style of sentiment which seems to make of life itself a long-drawn endless sigh, has something in it that pleases me, in spite of rules and criticism. Goethe's tragedies are (those that I have seen of them, his Count Egmont, Stella, &c.) constructed upon the second or inverted manner of the German stage, with a deliberate design to avoid all possible effect and interest, and this object is completely accomplished. He is however spoken of with enthusiasm almost amounting to idolatry by his countrymen, and those among ourselves who import heavy German criticism into this country in shallow flat-bottomed unwieldy intellects. Madame De Stael speaks of one passage in his Iphigenia, where he introduces a fragment of an old song, which the Furies are supposed to sing to Tantalus in hell, reproaching him with the times when he sat with the Gods at their golden tables, and with his after-crimes that hurled him from heaven, at which he turns his eyes from his children and hangs his head in mournful silence. This is the true sublime. Of all his works I like his Werter best, nor would I part with it at a venture, even for the Memoirs of Anastasius the Greek, whoever is the author; nor ever cease to think of the times, 'when in the fine summer evenings they saw the frank, noble-minded enthusiast coming up from the valley,' nor of 'the high grass that by the light of the departing sun waved in the breeze over his grave.'

But I have said enough to give an idea of this modern style, compared with our own early Dramatic Literature, of which I had to treat.—I have done: and if I have done no better, the fault has been in me, not in the subject. My liking to this grew with my knowledge of it: but so did my anxiety to do it justice. I somehow felt it as a point of honour not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers than I myself did of them. If I have praised an author, it was because I liked him: if I have quoted a passage, it was because it pleased me in the reading: if I have spoken contemptuously

of any one, it has been reluctantly. It is no easy task that a writer, even in so humble a class as myself, takes upon him; he is scouted and ridiculed if he fails; and if he succeeds, the enmity and cavils and malice with which he is assailed, are just in proportion to his success. The coldness and jealousy of his friends not unfrequently keep pace with the rancour of his enemies. They do not like you a bit the better for fulfilling the good opinion they always entertained of you. They would wish you to be always promising a great deal, and doing nothing, that they may answer for the performance. That shows their sagacity and does not hurt their vanity. An author wastes his time in painful study and obscure researches, to gain a little breath of popularity, meets with nothing but vexation and disappointment in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred; or when he thinks to grasp the luckless prize, finds it not worth the trouble—the perfume of a minute, fleeting as a shadow, hollow as a sound; 'as often got without merit as lost without deserving.' He thinks that the attainment of acknowledged excellence will secure him the expression of those feelings in others, which the image and hope of it had excited in his own breast, but instead of that, he meets with nothing (or scarcely nothing) but squint-eyed suspicion, idiot wonder, and grinning scorn.—It seems hardly worth while to have taken all the pains he has been at for this!

In youth we borrow patience from our future years: the spring of hope gives us courage to act and suffer. A cloud is upon our onward path, and we fancy that all is sunshine beyond it. The prospect seems endless, because we do not know the end of it. We think that life is long, because art is so, and that, because we have much to do, it is well worth doing: or that no exertions can be too great, no sacrifices too painful, to overcome the difficulties we have to encounter. Life is a continued struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot. But as we approach the goal, we draw in the reins; the impulse is less, as we have not so far to go; as we see objects nearer, we become less sanguine in the pursuit: it is not the despair of not attaining, so much as knowing there is nothing worth obtaining, and the fear of having nothing left even to wish for, that damps our ardour, and relaxes our efforts; and if the mechanical habit did not increase the facility, would, I believe, take away all inclination or power to do any thing. We stagger on the few remaining paces to the end of our journey; make perhaps one final effort; and are glad when our task is done!

End of Lectures on the
Age of Elizabeth

PREFACE AND CRITICAL LIST OF AUTHORS

FROM

SELECT BRITISH POETS

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The first edition of the *Select British Poets* (5⅞ in. × 9 in.) was published in 1824 with the following title-page: 'Select British Poets, or New Elegant Extracts from Chaucer to the Present Time, with Critical Remarks. By William Hazlitt. Embellished with Seven Ornamented Portraits, after a Design by T. Stothard, R.A. London: Published by Wm. C. Hall, and sold by all Booksellers. 1824.' The frontispiece bore the imprint 'London. Published by T. Tegg, 73, Cheapside, June 1824.' This edition included selections from the works of living poets, and was suppressed upon a threat of legal proceedings on behalf of some of the copyright owners. There is a copy in the British Museum, but the volume is exceedingly rare. In the following year (1825), a second edition was published with a fresh title-page, the copyright poems being omitted. The title-page ran: 'Select Poets of Great Britain. To which are prefixed, Critical Notices of Each Author. By William Hazlitt, Esq. Author of "Lectures on the English Poets," "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays," "Lectures on Dramatic Literature," etc. London: Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars, for Thomas Tegg, 73, Cheapside; R. Griffin and Co., Glasgow; also R. Milliken, Dublin; and M. Baudry, Paris. 1825.' The pages which follow are printed from the first (complete) edition of 1824.

PREFACE

The volume here presented to the public is an attempt to improve upon the plan of the Elegant Extracts in Verse by the late Dr. Knox. From the length of time which had elapsed since the first appearance of that work, a similar undertaking admitted of considerable improvement, although the size of the volume has been compressed by means of a more severe selection of matter. At least, a third of the former popular and in many respects valuable work was devoted to articles either entirely worthless, or recommended only by considerations foreign to the reader of poetry. The object and indeed ambition of the present compiler has been to offer to the public a Body of English Poetry, from Chaucer to Burns, such as might at once satisfy individual curiosity and justify our national pride. We have reason to boast of the genius of our country for poetry and of the trophies earned in that way; and it is well to have a collection of such examples of excellence inwoven together as may serve to nourish our own taste and love for the sublime or beautiful, and also to silence the objections of foreigners, who are too ready to treat us as behindhand with themselves in all that relates to the arts of refinement and elegance. If in some respects we are so, it behoves us the more to cultivate and cherish the superiority we can lay claim to in others. Poetry is one of those departments in which we possess a decided and as it were natural pre-eminence: and therefore no pains should be spared in selecting and setting off to advantage the different proofs and vouchers of it.

All that could be done for this object, has been attempted in the present instance. I have brought together in one view (to the best of my judgment) the most admired smaller pieces of poetry, and the most striking passages in larger works, which could not themselves be given entire. I have availed myself of the plan chalked out by my predecessor, but in the hope of improving upon it. To possess a

work of this kind ought to be like holding the contents of a library in one's hand without any of the refuse or 'baser matter.' If it had not been thought that the former work admitted of considerable improvement in the choice of subjects, inasmuch as inferior and indifferent productions not rarely occupied the place of sterling excellence, the present publication would not have been hazarded. Another difference is that I have followed the order of time, instead of the division of the subjects. By this method, the progress of poetry is better seen and understood; and besides, the real subjects of poetry are so much alike or run so much into one another, as not easily to come under any precise classification.

The great deficiency which I have to lament is the small portion of Shakespear's poetry, which has been introduced into the work; but this arose unavoidably from the plan of it, which did not extend to dramatic poetry as a general species. The extracts from the best parts of Chaucer, which are given at some length, will, it is hoped, be acceptable to the lover both of poetry and history. The quotations from Spenser do not occupy a much larger space than in the Elegant Extracts; but entire passages are given, instead of a numberless quantity of shreds and patches. The essence of Spenser's poetry was a continuous, endless flow of indescribable beauties, like the galaxy or milky way:—Dr. Knox has 'taken him and cut him out in little stars,' which was repugnant to the genius of his writings. I have made it my aim to exhibit the characteristic and striking features of English poetry and English genius; and with this view have endeavoured to give such specimens from each author as showed his peculiar powers of mind and the peculiar style in which he excelled, and have omitted those which were not only less remarkable in themselves, but were common to him with others, or in which others surpassed him, who were therefore the proper models in that particular way. *Cuique tribuitur suum.* In a word, it has been proposed to retain those passages and pieces with which the reader of taste and feeling would be most pleased in the perusal of the original works, and to which he would wish oftenest to turn again—and which consequently may be conceived to conduce most beneficially to form the taste and amuse the fancy of those who have not leisure or industry to make themselves masters of the whole range of

English poetry. By leaving out a great deal of uninteresting and common-place poetry, room has been obtained for nearly all that was emphatically excellent. The reader, it is presumed, may here revel and find no end of delight, in the racy vigour and manly characteristic humour, or simple pathos of Chaucer's Muse, in the gorgeous voluptuousness and romantic tenderness of Spenser, in the severe, studied beauty and awful majesty of Milton, in the elegance and refinement and harmony of Pope, in the strength and satire and sounding rhythm of Dryden, in the sportive gaiety and graces of Suckling, Dorset, Gay, and Prior, in Butler's wit, in Thomson's rural scenes, in Cowper's terse simplicity, in Burns's laughing eye and feeling heart (among standard and established reputations)—and in the polished tenderness of Campbell, the buoyant heart-felt levity of Moore, the striking, careless, picturesque beauties of Scott, the thoughtful humanity of Wordsworth, and Byron's glowing rage (among those whose reputation seems less solid and towering, because we are too near them to perceive its height or measure its duration). Others might be mentioned to lengthen out the list of poetic names

> 'That on the steady breeze of honour sail
> In long possession, calm and beautiful:'—

but from all together enough has been gleaned to make a 'perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.' Such at least has been my ardent wish; and if this volume is not pregnant with matter both 'rich and rare,' it has been the fault of the compiler, and not of the poverty or niggardliness of the ENGLISH MUSE.

W. H.

A CRITICAL LIST

OF

AUTHORS CONTAINED IN THIS VOLUME

CHAUCER is in the first class of poetry (the *natural*) and one of the first. He describes the common but individual objects of nature and the strongest and most universal, because spontaneous workings of the heart. In invention he has not much to boast, for the materials are chiefly borrowed (except in some of his comic tales); but the masterly execution is his own. He is remarkable for the degree and variety of the qualities he possesses—excelling equally in the comic and serious. He has little fancy, but he has great wit, great humour, strong manly sense, great power of description, perfect knowledge of character, occasional sublimity, as in parts of the *Knight's Tale*, and the deepest pathos, as in the story of *Griselda*, *Custance*, *the Flower and the Leaf*, &c. In humour and spirit, *the Wife of Bath* is unequalled.

SPENSER excels in the two qualities in which Chaucer is most deficient—invention and fancy. The invention shown in his allegorical personages is endless, as the fancy shown in his description of them is gorgeous and delightful. He is the poet of romance. He describes things as in a splendid and voluptuous dream. He has displayed no comic talent, except in his *Shepherd's Calendar*. He has little attempt at character, an occasional visionary sublimity, and a pensive tenderness approaching to the finest pathos. Nearly all that is excellent in the *Faery Queen* is contained in the three first Books. His style is sometimes ambiguous and affected; but his versification is to the last degree flowing and harmonious.

Sir PHILIP SIDNEY is an affected writer, but with great power of thought and description. His poetry, of which he did not write much, has the faults of his prose without its recommendations.

DRAYTON has chiefly tried his strength in description and learned narrative. The plan of the *Poly-Olbion* (a local or geographical account of Great Britain) is original, but not very happy. The

descriptions of places are often striking and curious, but become tedious by uniformity. There is some fancy in the poem, but little general interest. His Heroic Epistles have considerable tenderness and dignity; and, in the structure of the verse, have served as a model to succeeding writers.

DANIEL is chiefly remarkable for simplicity of style, and natural tenderness. In some of his occasional pieces (as the *Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland*) there is a vast philosophic gravity and stateliness of sentiment.

Sir JOHN SUCKLING is one of the most piquant and attractive of the Minor poets. He has fancy, wit, humour, descriptive talent, the highest elegance, perfect ease, a familiar style and a pleasing versification. He has combined all these in his *Ballad on a Wedding*, which is a masterpiece of sportive gaiety and good humour. His genius was confined entirely to the light and agreeable.

GEORGE WITHER is a poet of comparatively little power; though he has left one or two exquisitely affecting passages, having a personal reference to his own misfortunes.

WALLER belonged to the same class as Suckling—the sportive, the sparkling, the polished, with fancy, wit, elegance of style, and easiness of versification at his command. Poetry was the plaything of his idle hours—the mistress, to whom he addressed his verses, was his real Muse. His lines on the *Death of Oliver Cromwell* are however serious, and even sublime.

MILTON was one of the four great English poets, who must certainly take precedence over all others, I mean himself, Spenser, Chaucer, and Shakespear. His subject is not common or *natural* indeed, but it is of preternatural grandeur and unavoidable interest. He is altogether a serious poet; and in this differs from Chaucer and Shakespear, and resembles Spenser. He has sublimity in the highest degree: beauty in an equal degree; pathos in a degree next to the highest; perfect character in the conception of Satan, of Adam and Eve; fancy, learning, vividness of description, stateliness, decorum. He seems on a par with his subjects in *Paradise Lost*; to raise it, and to be raised with it. His style is elaborate and powerful, and his versification, with occasional harshness and affectation, superior in harmony and variety to all other blank verse. It has the effect of a piece of fine music. His smaller pieces, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, the Sonnets, &c., display proportionable excellence, from their beauty, sweetness, and elegance.

Cowley is a writer of great sense, ingenuity, and learning; but as a poet, his fancy is quaint, far-fetched, and mechanical, and he has no other distinguishing quality whatever. To these objections his Anacreontics are a delightful exception. They are the perfection of that sort of gay, unpremeditated, lyrical effusion. They breathe the very spirit of love and wine. Most of his other pieces should be read for instruction, not for pleasure.

Marvell is a writer almost forgotten: but undeservedly so. His poetical reputation seems to have sunk with his political party. His satires were coarse, quaint, and virulent; but his other productions are full of a lively, tender, and elegant fancy. His verses leave an echo on the ear, and find one in the heart. See those entitled Bermudas, To his Coy Mistress, On the Death of a Fawn, &c.

Butler (the author of *Hudibras*) has undoubtedly more wit than any other writer in the language. He has little besides to recommend him, if we except strong sense, and a laudable contempt of absurdity and hypocrisy. He has little story, little character, and no great humour in his singular poem. The invention of the fable seems borrowed from Don Quixote. He has however prodigious merit in his style, and in the fabrication of his rhymes.

Sir John Denham's fame rests chiefly on his *Cooper's Hill*. This poem is a mixture of the descriptive and didactic, and has given birth to many poems on the same plan since. His *forte* is strong, sound sense, and easy, unaffected, manly verse.

Dryden stands nearly at the head of the second class of English poets, *viz.* the *artificial*, or those who describe the mixed modes of artificial life, and convey general precepts and abstract ideas. He had invention in the plan of his Satires, very little fancy, not much wit, no humour, immense strength of character, elegance, masterly ease, indignant contempt approaching to the sublime, not a particle of tenderness, but eloquent declamation, the perfection of uncorrupted English style, and of sounding, vehement, varied versification. The *Alexander's Feast*, his *Fables* and *Satires*, are his standard and lasting works.

Rochester, as a wit, is first-rate: but his fancy is keen and caustic, not light and pleasing, like Suckling or Waller. His verses cut and sparkle like diamonds.

Roscommon excelled chiefly as a translator; but his translation of *Horace's Art of Poetry* is so *unique* a specimen of fidelity and felicity, that it has been adopted into this collection.

Pomfret left one popular poem behind him, The Choice; the attraction of which may be supposed to lie rather in the subject than in the peculiar merit of the execution.

Lord Dorset, for the playful ease and elegance of his verses, is not surpassed by any of the poets of that class.

J. Philips's Splendid Shilling makes the fame of this poet—it is a lucky thought happily executed.

Halifax (of whom two short poems are here retained) was the least of the Minor poets—one of 'the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease.'

The praise of Parnell's poetry is, that it was moral, amiable, with a tendency towards the pensive; and it was his fortune to be the friend of poets.

Prior is not a very moral poet, but the most arch, piquant, and equivocal of those that have been admitted into this collection. He is a graceful narrator, a polished wit, full of the delicacies of style amidst gross allusions.

Pope is at the head of the second class of poets, *viz.* the describers of artificial life and manners. His works are a delightful, never-failing fund of good sense and refined taste. He had high invention and fancy of the comic kind, as in the *Rape of the Lock*; wit, as in the *Dunciad* and *Satires*; no humour; some beautiful descriptions, as in the *Windsor Forest*; some exquisite delineations of character (those of Addison and Villiers are master-pieces); he is a model of elegance everywhere, but more particularly in his eulogies and friendly epistles; his ease is the effect of labour; he has no pretensions to sublimity, but sometimes displays an indignant moral feeling akin to it; his pathos is playful and tender, as in his Epistles to *Arbuthnot* and *Jervas*, or rises into power by the help of rhetoric, as in the *Eloisa*, and *Elegy on the Death of an Unfortunate Lady*; his style is polished and almost faultless in its kind; his versification tires by uniform smoothness and harmony. He has been called 'the most sensible of poets:' but the proofs of his sense are to be looked for in his single observations and hints, as in the *Essay on Criticism* and *Moral Epistles*, and not in the larger didactic reasonings of the *Essay on Man*, which is full of verbiage and bombast.

If good sense has been made the characteristic of Pope, good-nature might be made (with at least equal truth) the characteristic of Gay. He was a satirist without gall. He had a delightful placid

vein of invention, fancy, wit, humour, description, ease and elegance, a happy style, and a versification which seemed to cost him nothing. His *Beggar's Opera* indeed has stings in it, but it appears to have left the writer's mind without any.

The *Grave* of BLAIR is a serious and somewhat gloomy poem, but pregnant with striking reflections and fine fancy.

SWIFT's poetry is not at all equal to his prose. He was actuated by the spleen in both. He has however sense, wit, humour, ease, and even elegance when he pleases, in his poetical effusions. But he trifled with the Muse. He has written more agreeable nonsense than any man. His *Verses on his own Death* are affecting and beautiful.

AMBROSE PHILIPS's *Pastorals* were ridiculed by Pope, and their merit is of an humble kind. They may be said rather to mimic nature than to imitate it. They talk about rural objects, but do not paint them. His verses descriptive of a NORTHERN WINTER are better.

THOMSON is the best and most original of our descriptive poets. He had nature; but, through indolence or affectation, too often embellished it with the gaudy ornaments of art. Where he gave way to his genuine impulses, he was excellent. He had invention in the choice of his subject (*The Seasons*), some fancy, wit and humour of a most voluptuous kind; in the *Castle of Indolence*, great descriptive power. His elegance is tawdriness; his ease slovenliness; he sometimes rises into sublimity, as in his account of the *Torrid* and *Frozen Zones*; he has occasional pathos too, as in his *Traveller Lost in the Snow*; his style is barbarous, and his ear heavy and bad.

COLLINS, of all our Minor poets, that is, those who have attempted only short pieces, is probably the one who has shown the most of the highest qualities of poetry, and who excites the most intense interest in the bosom of the reader. He soars into the regions of imagination, and occupies the highest peaks of Parnassus. His fancy is glowing, vivid, but at the same time hasty and obscure. Gray's sublimity was borrowed and mechanical, compared to Collins's, who has the true inspiration, the *vivida vis* of the poet. He heats and melts objects in the fervour of his genius, as in a furnace. See his *Odes to Fear*, *On the Poetical Character*, and *To Evening*. The *Ode on the Passions* is the most popular, but the most artificial of his principal ones. His qualities were fancy, sublimity of conception, and no mean degree of pathos, as in the *Eclogues*, and the *Dirge in Cymbeline*.

Dyer's *Grongar Hill* is a beautiful moral and descriptive effusion, with much elegance, and perfect ease of style and versification.

Shenstone was a writer inclined to feebleness and affectation: but when he could divest himself of sickly pretensions, he produces occasional excellence of a high degree. His School-mistress is the perfection of *naïve* description, and of that mixture of pathos and humour, than which nothing is more delightful or rare.

Mallet was a poet of small merit—but every one has read his *Edwin and Emma*, and no one ever forgot it.

Akenside is a poet of considerable power, but of little taste or feeling. His thoughts, like his style, are stately and imposing, but turgid and gaudy. In his verse, '*less* is meant than meets the ear.' He has some merit in the invention of the subject (the *Pleasures of Imagination*) his poem being the first of a series of similar ones on the faculties of the mind, as the *Pleasures of Memory*, *of Hope*, &c.

Young is a poet who has been much over-rated from the popularity of his subject, and the glitter and lofty pretensions of his style. I wished to have made more extracts from the *Night-Thoughts*, but was constantly repelled by the tinsel of expression, the false ornaments, and laboured conceits. Of all writers who have gained a great name, he is the most meretricious and objectionable. His is false wit, false fancy, false sublimity, and mock-tenderness. At least, it appears so to me.

Gray was an author of great pretensions, but of great merit. He has an air of sublimity, if not the reality. He aims at the highest things; and if he fails, it is only by a hair's-breadth. His pathos is injured, like his sublimity, by too great an ambition after the ornaments and machinery of poetry. His craving after foreign help perhaps shows the want of the internal impulse. His *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, which is the most simple, is the best of his productions.

Churchill is a fine rough satirist. He had sense, wit, eloquence, and honesty.

Goldsmith, both in verse and prose, was one of the most delightful writers in the language. His verse flows like a limpid stream. His ease is quite unconscious. Every thing in him is spontaneous, unstudied, unaffected, yet elegant, harmonious, graceful, nearly faultless. Without the point or refinement of Pope, he has more natural tender-

ness, a greater suavity of manner, a more genial spirit. Goldsmith never rises into sublimity, and seldom sinks into insipidity, or stumbles upon coarseness. His *Traveller* contains masterly national sketches. The *Deserted Village* is sometimes spun out into a mawkish sentimentality; but the characters of the *Village Schoolmaster*, and the *Village Clergyman*, redeem a hundred faults. His *Retaliation* is a poem of exquisite spirit, humour, and freedom of style.

ARMSTRONG'S *Art of Preserving Health* displays a fine natural vein of sense and poetry on a most unpromising subject.

CHATTERTON'S *Remains* show great premature power, but are chiefly interesting from his fate. He discovered great boldness of spirit and versatility of talent; yet probably, if he had lived, would not have increased his reputation for genius.

THOMAS WARTON was a man of taste and genius. His SONNETS I cannot help preferring to any in the language.

COWPER is the last of the English poets in the first division of this collection, but though last, not least. He is, after Thomson, the best of our descriptive poets—more minute and graphical, but with less warmth of feeling and natural enthusiasm than the author of THE SEASONS. He has also fine manly sense, a pensive and interesting turn of thought, tenderness occasionally running into the most touching pathos, and a patriotic or religious zeal mounting almost into sublimity. He had great simplicity with terseness of style: his versification is neither strikingly faulty nor excellent. His occasional copies of verses have great elegance; and his *John Gilpin* is one of the most humorous pieces in the language.

BURNS concludes the series of the ILLUSTRIOUS DEAD; and one might be tempted to write an elegy rather than a criticism on him. In *naïveté*, in spirit, in characteristic humour, in vivid description of natural objects and of the natural feelings of the heart, he has left behind him no superior.

Of the living poets I wish to speak freely, but candidly.

ROGERS is an elegant and highly polished writer, but without much originality or power. He seems to have paid the chief attention to his style—*Materiam superabat opus*. He writes, however, with an admiration of the muse, and with an interest in humanity.

Campbell has equal elegance, equal elaborateness, with more power and scope both of thought and fancy. His *Pleasures of Hope* is too artificial and antithetical; but his *Gertrude of Wyoming* strikes at the heart of nature, and has passages of extreme interest, with an air of tenderness and sweetness over the whole, like the breath of flowers. Some of his shorter effusions have great force and animation, and a patriotic fire.

Bloomfield's excellence is confined to a minute and often interesting description of individual objects in nature, in which he is surpassed perhaps by no one.

Crabbe is a writer of great power, but of a perverse and morbid taste. He gives the very objects and feelings he treats of, whether in morals or rural scenery, but he gives none but the most uninteresting or the most painful. His poems are a sort of funeral dirge over human life, but without pity, without hope. He has neither smiles nor tears for his readers.

Coleridge has shewn great wildness of conception in his *Ancient Mariner*, sublimity of imagery in his *Ode to the Departing Year*, grotesqueness of fancy in his *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter*, and tenderness of sentiment in his *Genevieve*. He has however produced nothing equal to his powers.

Mr. Wordsworth's characteristic is one, and may be expressed in one word;—a power of raising the smallest things in nature into sublimity by the force of sentiment. He attaches the deepest and loftiest feelings to the meanest and most superficial objects. His peculiarity is his combination of simplicity of subject with profundity and power of execution. He has no fancy, no wit, no humour, little descriptive power, no dramatic power, great occasional elegance, with continual rusticity and boldness of allusion; but he is sublime without the Muse's aid, pathetic in the contemplation of his own and man's nature; add to this, that his style is natural and severe, and his versification sonorous and expressive.

Mr. Southey's talent in poetry lies chiefly in fancy and the invention of his subject. Some of his oriental descriptions, characters, and fables, are wonderfully striking and impressive, but there is an air of extravagance in them, and his versification is abrupt, affected, and repulsive. In his early poetry there is a vein of patriotic fervour, and mild and beautiful moral reflection.

Sir Walter Scott is the most popular of our living poets. His

excellence is romantic narrative and picturesque description. He has great bustle, great rapidity of action and flow of versification, with a sufficient distinctness of character, and command of the ornaments of style. He has neither lofty imagination, nor depth or intensity of feeling; *vividness of mind* is apparently his chief and pervading excellence.

Mr. C. Lamb has produced no poems equal to his prose writings: but I could not resist the temptation of transferring into this collection his *Farewell to Tobacco*, and some of the sketches in his *John Woodvil*; the first of which is rarely surpassed in quaint wit, and the last in pure feeling.

Montgomery is an amiable and pleasing versifier, who puts his heart and fancy into whatever he composes.

Lord Byron's distinguishing quality is intensity of conception and expression. He *wills* to be sublime or pathetic. He has great wildness of invention, brilliant and elegant fancy, caustic wit, but no humour. Gray's description of the poetical character—'Thoughts that glow, and words that burn,'—applies to him more than to any of his contemporaries.

Thomas Moore is the greatest wit now living. His light, ironical pieces are unrivalled for point and facility of execution. His fancy is delightful and brilliant, and his songs have gone to the heart of a nation.

Leigh Hunt has shewn great wit in his *Feast of the Poets*, elegance in his occasional verses, and power of description and pathos in his *Story of Rimini*. The whole of the third canto of that poem is as chaste as it is classical.

The late Mr. Shelley (for he is dead since the commencement of this publication) was chiefly distinguished by a fervour of philosophic speculation, which he clad in the garb of fancy, and in words of Tyrian die. He had spirit and genius, but his eagerness to give effect and produce conviction often defeated his object, and bewildered himself and his readers.

Lord Thurlow has written some very unaccountable, but some occasionally good and feeling poetry.

Mr. Keats is also dead. He gave the greatest promise of genius of any poet of his day. He displayed extreme tenderness, beauty, originality, and delicacy of fancy; all he wanted was manly strength

and fortitude to reject the temptations of singularity in sentiment and expression. Some of his shorter and later pieces are, however, as free from faults as they are full of beauties.

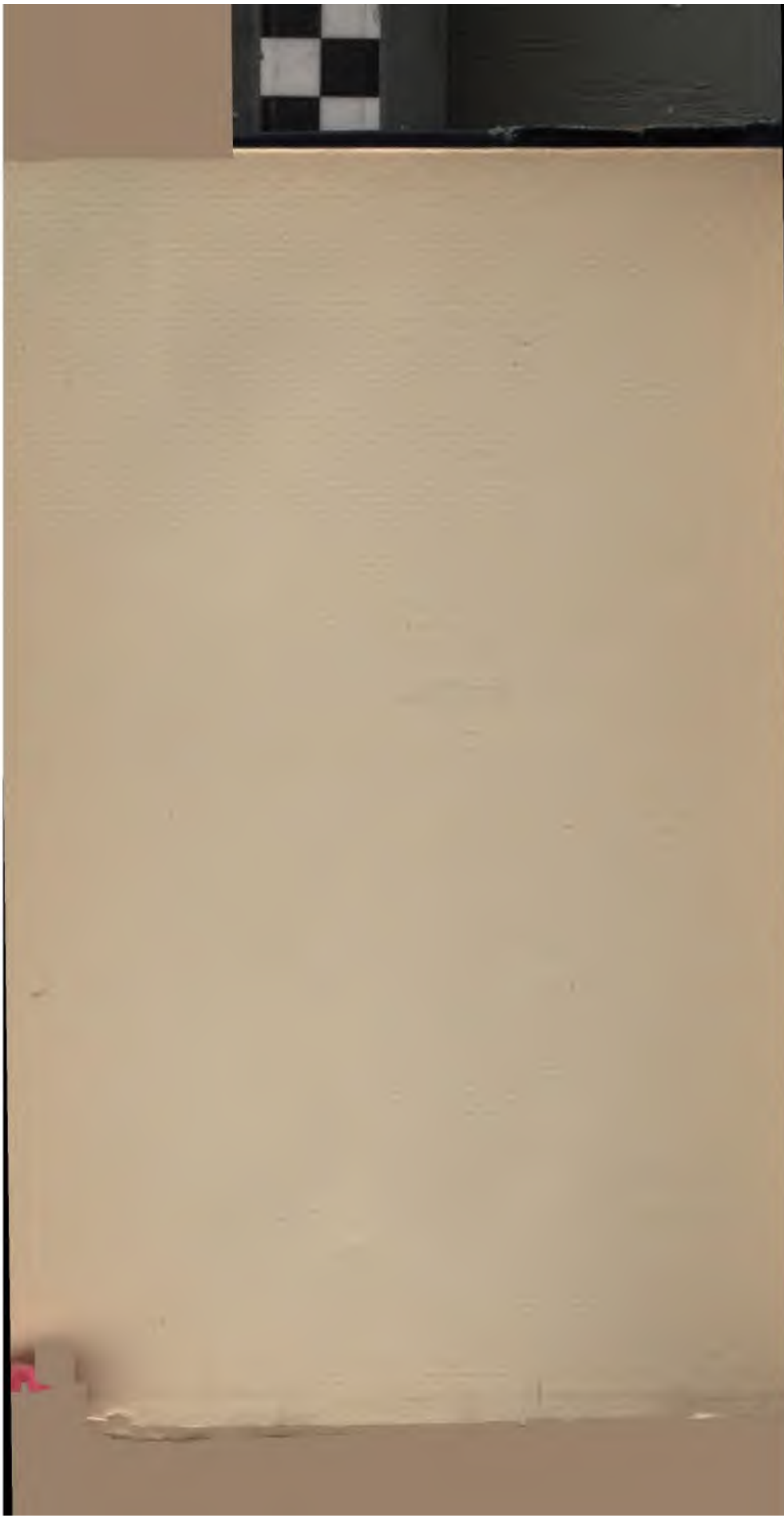
Mr. MILMAN is a writer of classical taste and attainments rather than of original genius. *Poeta nascitur—non fit.*

Of BOWLES's sonnets it is recommendation enough to say, that they were the favourites of Mr. Coleridge's youthful mind.

It only remains to speak of Mr. BARRY CORNWALL, who, both in the drama, and in his other poems, has shewn brilliancy and tenderness of fancy, and a fidelity to truth and nature, in conceiving the finer movements of the mind equal to the felicity of his execution in expressing them.

Some additions have been made in the Miscellaneous part of the volume, from the Lyrical effusions of the elder Dramatists, whose beauty, it is presumed, can never decay, whose sweetness can never cloy!

NOTES



NOTES

LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS

I. ON POETRY IN GENERAL

Any differences between the text quoted by Hazlitt and the texts used for the purposes of these notes which seem worth pointing out are indicated in square brackets.

For Sergeant Talfourd's impressions of these lectures, and other matters of interest connected with their delivery, the reader may be referred to the *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, vol. i., pp. 236 *et seq.*

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1. *Spreads its sweet leaves.* *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i.
2. *The stuff of which our life is made.* Cf. *The Tempest*, IV. i.
   Mere oblivion. *As You Like It*, II. 7.
   Man's life is poor as beast's. *King Lear*, II. 4. ['Man's life 's as cheap as beast's.']
   There is warrant for it. Cf. *Richard III.*, I. 4, and *Macbeth*, II. 3.
   Such seething brains and *the lunatic.* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. 1.
3. *Angelica and Medoro.* Characters in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516).
   Plato banished the poets. *The Republic*, Book X.
   Ecstasy is very cunning in. *Hamlet*, III. 4.
   According to Lord Bacon. An adaptation of a passage in the *Advancement of Learning*, Book II., Chap. xiii. (ed. Joseph Devey, *Bohn*, p. 97).
4. *Our eyes are made the fools.* *Macbeth*, II. 1.
   That if it would but apprehend. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. 1.
   The flame o' the taper. *Cymbeline*, II. 2.
   For they are old. Cf. *King Lear*, II. 4.
5. *Nothing but his unkind daughters.* *King Lear*, III. 4. ['Could have subdued nature to such a lowness.']
   The little dogs. *King Lear*, III. 6.
   So I am. *King Lear*, IV. 7.
   O now for ever. *Othello*, III. 3.
6. *Never, Iago.* *Othello*, III. 3.
   But there where I have garner'd. *Othello*, IV. 2.
   Moore. Edward Moore (1712-1757), author of *The Gamester* (1753).
   Lillo. George Lillo (1693-1739), author of *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* (1731).
7. *As Mr. Burke observes.* *Sublime and Beautiful*, Part I. § 15.
   Masterless passion. *Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1.
   ['for affection,
   Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood.']
   Satisfaction to the thought. Cf. *Othello*, III. 3.
8. *Now night descending.* *Dunciad*, I. 89, 90.

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8. *Throw him on the steep. Ode to Fear.*
['ridgy steep
Of some loose hanging rock to sleep.']
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend. King Lear, I. 4. ['More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child.']
Both at the first and now. Hamlet, III. 2.

9. *Doctor Chalmers's Discoveries.* Thomas Chalmers, D.D. (1780-1847), who sought in his *A Series of Discourses on the Christian Revelation, viewed in connection with Modern Astronomy* (1817), to reconcile science with current conceptions of Christianity. See *The Spirit of the Age*, vol. III. p. 228 and note.

10. *Bandit fierce. Comus*, l. 426.
Our fell of hair. Macbeth, v. 5.
Macbeth . . . for the sake of the music. Probably Purcell's. It was written for D'Avenant's version and produced in 1672 (Genest). Cf. *The Round Table*, vol. I. p. 138 and note.
Between the acting. Julius Caesar, II. 1. ['The Genius and the mortal instruments.']

11. *Thoughts that voluntary move. Paradise Lost*, III. 37, 38.
The words of Mercury. Love's Labour's Lost, v. 11. ['The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.']
So from the ground. Faery Queene, I. vi. ['With doubled Eccho.']

12. *The secret soul of harmony. L'Allegro*, l. 144. ['The hidden soul of harmony.']
The golden cadences of poetry. Love's Labour's Lost, IV. 2.
Sailing with supreme dominion. Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, III. 3.

13. *Sounding always.* Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, l. 275.
Addison's Campaign. 1705. Addison wrote it on Marlborough's victory of Blenheim. For its description as a 'Gazette in Rhyme,' see Dr. Joseph Warton's (1722-1800) *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756-82).

14. *Married to immortal verse. L'Allegro*, l. 137.
Dipped in dews of Castalie. Cf. T. Heywood's,
'And Jonson, though his learned pen
Was dipt in Castaly, is still but Ben.'
The most beautiful of all the Greek tragedies. Sophocles's *Philoctetes.*
As I walked about. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Part I. p. 125, ed. G. A. Aitken.

15. *Give an echo. Twelfth Night*, II. 4.
Our poesy. Timon of Athens, I. 1. ['Which oozes.']

16. *All plumed like ostriches.* Adapted from the First Part of *King Henry IV.*, IV. 1. ['As full of spirit as the month of May.']
If we fly into the uttermost parts of the earth. Cf. *Psalms*, cxxxix. 9-11.

18. *Pope Anastasius the Sixth. Inferno*, XI.
Count Ugolino. Inferno, XXXIII. Neither was Lamb satisfied with the conception. See his paper on 'The Reynolds Gallery' in *The Examiner*, June 6, 1813.
The lamentation of Selma. Colma's lament in the *Songs of Selma.*

II. ON CHAUCER AND SPENSER.

The Chaucer and Spenser references throughout are to Skeat's *Student's Chaucer*, and to the *Globe* Edition of *Spenser* (Morris and Hales).

19. *Chaucer.* Modern authorities date Chaucer's birth from 1340. It is no longer held as true that he had an university education. The story of his plot against the king, his flight and his imprisonment, is also legendary.

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20. *Close pent up*, and the next quotation. *King Lear*, III. 2.
Flowery tenderness. Measure for Measure, III. 1.
And as the new abashed nightingale. Troilus and Criseyde, III. 177.
Thus passeth yere by yere. ll. 1033-9 ['fairer of hem two'].

21. *That stondeth at a gap.* 'The Knightes Tale,' 1639-42.
Have ye not seen. 'The Tale of the Man of Law,' 645-51.
Swiche sorrow he maketh. 'The Knightes Tale,' 1277-80.

22. *Babbling gossip of the air. Twelfth Night*, I. 5.
There was also a nonne. 'The Prologue,' 118-129 ['Entuned in hir nose ful semely']; 137-155 ['And held after the newe world the space']; 165-178; 189-207.

24. *Lawyer Dowling.* Book VIII., Chap. viii.
No wher so besy a man. 'The Prologue,' 321-2.
Whose hous it snewed. Ibid. 345.
Who rode upon a rouncie. Ibid. 390.
Whose studie was but litel of the Bible. Ibid. 438.
All whose parish. Ibid. 449-52.
Whose parish was wide. Ibid. 491.
A slendre colerike man. Ibid. 587.
Chaucer, it has been said, numbered the classes of men. Cf. Wm. Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue*, III. 'As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linnaeus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men.'
A Sompnoure. Ibid. 623-41. ['Children were aferd,' 'oynons, and eek lekes,' 'A fewe termes hadde he']; 663-669.

25. *Ther maist thou se.* 'The Knightes Tale,' 2128-2151; 2155-2178; 2185-6.

27. *The Flower and the Leaf.* Most modern scholars regard the evidence which attributes this poem to Chaucer as insufficient. The same few words of Hazlitt's were originally used in *The Round Table*, 'Why the Arts are not Progressive?' vol. I. p. 162.

28. *Griselda.* 'The Clerkes Tale.' See *The Round Table*, vol. I. p. 162.
The faith of Constance. 'The Tale of the Man of Law.'

29. *Oh Alma redemptoris mater.* 'The Prioress's Tale.'
Whan that Arcite. 'The Knightes Tale,' 1355-71. ['His hewe falwe.']
Alas the wo! ll. 2771-9.

30. *The three temples*, ll. 1918-2092.
Dryden's version, i.e. his 'Palamon and Arcite.'
Why shulde I not. 'The Knightes Tale,' 1967-9, 1972-80. ['In which ther dwelleth.']
The statue of Mars. Ibid. 2041-2, 2047-8.
That heaves no sigh. 'Heave thou no sigh, nor shed a tear,' Prior: *Answer to Chloe.*
Let me not like a worm. 'The Clerkes Tale,' l. 880.

31. *Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable. Ibid.* 197-245. ['Sette his yë']; 274-94 ['Hir threshold goon'].

32. *All conscience and tender heart.* 'The Prologue,' 150.
From grave to gay. Pope, *Essay on Man*, Ep. IV. 380.

33. *The Cock and the Fox.* 'The Nonne Preestes Tale of the Cok and Hen.'
January and May. 'The Marchantes Tale.'
The story of the three thieves. 'The Pardoners Tale.'
Mr. West. Benjamin West (1738-1820). See the article on this picture by Hazlitt in *The Edinburgh Magazine*, Dec. 1817, where the same extract is quoted.

34. *Ne Deth, alas.* 'The Marchantes Tale,' 727-38.

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34. *Occleve.* Thomas Hoccleve or Occleve (b. 1368), who expressed his grief at his 'master dear' Chaucer's death in his version of *De Regimine Principum.*
'Ancient Gower.' John Gower (1330-1408), who wrote *Confessio Amantis* (1392-3), and to whom Chaucer dedicated ('O moral Gower') his *Troilus and Criseyde.* See *Pericles,* I.
Lydgate. John Lydgate (*c.* 1370-*c.* 1440), poet and imitator of Chaucer.
Wyatt, Surry, and Sackville. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), courtier and poet; Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (*c.* 1518-1547), who shares with Wyatt the honour of introducing the sonnet into English verse; Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset (*c.* 1536-1608), part author of the earliest tragedy in English, *Ferrex and Porrex,* acted 1561-2.
Sir John Davies (1569-1626), poet and statesman. Spenser was sent to Ireland in 1580 as private secretary to Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton, Lord Deputy of Ireland. Davies was sent to Ireland as Solicitor-General in 1603, four years after Spenser's death.
The bog of Allan. The Faerie Queene, Book II. Canto IX.
An ably written paper. 'A View of the Present State of Ireland,' registered 1598, printed 1633.
An obscure inn. In King Street, Westminster, Jan. 13, 1599.
The treatment he received from Burleigh. It has been suggested that the disfavour with which Spenser was regarded by Burleigh—a disfavour that stood in the way of his preferment—was because of Spenser's friendship with Essex, and Leicester's patronage of him.

35. *Clap on high. The Faerie Queene,* III. XII. 23.
In green vine leaves. I. IV. 22.
Upon the top of all his lofty crest. I. VII. 32.
In reading the Faery Queen. The incidents mentioned will be found in Books III. 9, I. 7, II. 6, and III. 12, respectively.

36. *And mask, and antique pageantry. L'Allegro,* 128.
And more to lull him. I. I. 41.
The honey-heavy dew of slumber. Julius Caesar, II. I.
Eftsoons they heard. II. XII. 70-1. ['To read what manner.']
The whiles some one did chaunt. Ibid. 74-8. ['Bare to ready spoyl.']

38. *The House of Pride.* I. IV.
The Cave of Mammon. II. VII. 28-50.
The Cave of Despair. I. IX. 33-35.
The wars he well remember'd. II. IX. 56.
The description of Belphœbe. II. III. 21.
Florimel and the Witch's son. III. VII. 12.
The gardens of Adonis. III. VI. 29.
The Bower of Bliss. II. XII. 42.
Poussin's pictures. Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665). See Hazlitt's *Table Talk,* vol. VI. p. 168, *et seq.*
And eke that stranger knight. III. IX. 20.
Her hair was sprinkled with flowers. II. III. 30.
The cold icicles. III. VIII. 35. ['Ivory breast.'].
That was Arion crowned. IV. XI. line 3, stanza 23, and line 1, stanza 24.

39. *And by his side rode loathsome Gluttony.* I. IV. 21-2. ['In shape and life.']
And next to him rode lustfull Lechery. Ibid. 24-6.

40. *Yet not more sweet.* Carmen Nuptiale, *The Lay of the Laureate* (1816), xviii. 4-6.
The first was Fancy. III. XII. 7-13, 22-3. ['Next after her.']

42. *The account of Satyrane.* I. VI. 24.
Go seek some other play-fellows. Stanza 28. ['Go find.']

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42. *By the help of his fayre horns.* III. x. 47.
The change of Malbecco into Jealousy. III. x. 56-60.
That house's form. II. vii. 28-9, 23.
That all with one consent. Troilus and Cressida, III. 3.

43. *High over hill.* III. x. 55.
Pope, who used to ask. In view of this remark, it may be of interest to quote the following passage from Spence's *Anecdotes* (pp. 296-7, 1820; Section viii., 1743-4): 'There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age, as it did in one's youth. I read the *Faerie Queene*, when I was about twelve, with infinite delight, and I think it gave me as much, when I read it over about a year or two ago.'
The account of Talus, the Iron Man. V. i. 12.
The . . . Episode of Pastorella. VI. ix. 12.

44. *In many a winding bout.* *L'Allegro*, 139-140.

III. ON SHAKSPEARE AND MILTON

The references are to the *Globe* Edition of Shakespeare, and Masson's three-volume edition of Milton's *Poetical Works*. See *The Round Table*, 'On Milton's Versification,' vol. i. pp. 36 *et seq.*, for passages used again for the purposes of this lecture. See also *ibid.* 'Why the Arts are not Progressive?' pp. 160 *et seq*, and notes to those two Essays.

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46. *The human face divine.* *Paradise Lost*, III. 44.
And made a sunshine in the shady place. *Faerie Queene*, I. III. 4.
The fault has been more in their [is not in our] *stars.* Cf. *Julius Caesar*, I. 2.

47. *A mind reflecting ages past.* See vol. IV. notes to p. 213.
All corners of the earth. *Cymbeline*, III. iv.
Nodded to him. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III. 1.
His so potent art. *Tempest*, V. 1.

48. *Subject* [servile] *to the same* [all] *skyey influences.* *Measure for Measure*, III. 1.
His frequent haunts ['my daily walks']. *Comus*, 314.
Coheres semblably together. Cf. 2 *Henry IV.*, V. 1.
Me and thy crying self. *The Tempest*, I. 2.
What, man! ne'er pull your hat. *Macbeth*, IV. 3.
Man delights not me, and the following quotation. Adapted from *Hamlet*, II. 2. Rosencraus should be Rosencrantz.
A combination and a form. *Hamlet*, III. 4.

49. *My lord, as I was reading* [sewing]. *Hamlet*, II. 1. ['His stockings foul'd . . . so piteous in purport . . . loosed out of hell.']
There is a willow ['grows aslant']. *Hamlet*, IV. 7.

50. *He's speaking now.* *Antony and Cleopatra*, I. 5.
It is my birth-day. *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. 13.

51. *Nigh sphered in Heaven.* Collins's *Ode on the Poetical Character*, 66.
To make society the sweeter welcome. *Macbeth*, III. 1.

52. *With a little act upon the blood* [burn] *like the mines of sulphur.* *Othello*, III. 3. ['Syrups of the world.'].
While rage with rage. *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 3.
In their untroubled element.

> 'That glorious star
> In its untroubled element will shine,
> As now it shines, when we are laid in earth
> And safe from all our sorrows.'
>
> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, VI. 763-66.

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52. *Satan's address to the sun.* *Paradise Lost*, IV. 31 *et seq.*
53. *O that I were a mockery king of snow* [standing before] *the sun of Bolingbroke.* *Richard II.*, IV. 1.
His form had not yet lost. *Paradise Lost*, I. 591-4.
A modern school of poetry. The Lake School.
With what measure they mete. *St. Mark*, iv. 24; *St. Luke*, vi. 38.
It glances from heaven to earth. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. 1.
Puts a girdle. *Ibid.* II. 1.
54. *I ask that I might waken reverence* ['and bid the cheek']. *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 3.
No man is the lord of anything, and the following quotation. *Ibid.* III. 3.
55. *In Shakespeare.* Cf. 'On application to study,' *The Plain Speaker.*
Light thickens. *Macbeth*, III. 2.
His whole course of love. *Othello*, I. 3.
The business of the State. *Ibid.* IV. 2.
Of ditties highly penned. 1 *King Henry IV.*, III. 1.
And so by many winding nooks. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II. 7.
56. *Great vulgar and the small.* Cowley's *Translation of Horace's Ode*, III. 1.
His delights [were] *dolphin-like.* *Antony and Cleopatra*, V. 2.
57. *Blind Thamyris.* *Paradise Lost*, III. 35-6.
With darkness. *Ibid.* VII. 27.
Piling up every stone. *Ibid.* XI. 324-5.
For after . . . I had from my first years. *The Reason of Church Government*, Book II.
58. *The noble heart.* *Faerie Queene*, I. V. 1.
Makes Ossa like a wart. *Hamlet*, V. 1.
59. *Him followed Rimmon.* *Paradise Lost*, I. 467-9.
As when a vulture. *Ibid.* III. 431-9.
The great vision. *Lycidas*, 161.
The Pilot. *Paradise Lost*, I. 204.
The wandering moon. *Il Penseroso*, 67-70.
60. *Like a steam.* *Comus*, 556.
He soon saw within ken. *Paradise Lost*, III. 621-44.
61. *With Atlantean shoulders.* *Ibid.* II. 306-7.
Lay floating many a rood. *Ibid.* I. 196.
That sea beast, Leviathan. *Ibid.* I. 200-202.
What a force of imagination. Cf. *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, xi. 174, where J. H. T. Oakley points out that Milton is simply translating a well-known Greek phrase for the ocean.
His hand was known. *Paradise Lost*, I. 732-47.
62. *But chief the spacious hall.* *Ibid.* I. 762-88.
Round he surveys. *Ibid.* III. 555-67.
63. *Such as the meeting soul.* *L'Allegro*, 138-140.
The hidden soul. *Ibid.* 144.
God the Father turns a school-divine. Pope, 1st Epistle, *Hor.* Book II. 102.
As when heaven's fire. *Paradise Lost*, I. 612-13.
64. *All is not lost.* *Paradise Lost*, I. 106-9.
That intellectual being. *Paradise Lost*, II. 147-8.
Being swallowed up. *Ibid.* II. 149-50.
Fallen cherub. *Ibid.* I. 157-8.
Rising aloft ['he steers his flight aloft']. *Ibid.* I. 225-6.
65. *Is this the region.* *Ibid.* I. 242-63.
66. *His philippics against Salmasius.* In 1651 Milton replied in his *Defensio pro*

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66. *Populo Anglicano* to *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I.* (1649) by Claudius Salmasius or Claude de Saumaise (1588-1658), a professor at Leyden. The latter work had been undertaken at the request of Charles II. by Salmasius, who was regarded as the leading European scholar of his day.

With hideous ruin. *Paradise Lost*, I. 46.

Retreated in a silent valley. *Paradise Lost*, II. 547-50.

A noted political writer of the present day. See *Political Essays*, vol. III. pp. 155, *et seq.* 'Illustrations of the Times Newspaper,' and notes thereto. Dr. Stoddart and Napoleon the Great are the persons alluded to. See also Hone's 'Buonapartephobia, or the Origin of Dr. Slop's Name,' which had reached a tenth edition in 1820.

Longinus. On the Sublime, IX.

67. *No kind of traffic.* Adapted from *The Tempest*, II. I.

The generations were prepared. Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, VI. 554-57.

The unapparent deep. *Paradise Lost*, VII. 103.

Know to know no more. Cf. Cowper, *Truth*, 327.

They toiled not. *St. Matthew*, VI. 28, 29.

In them the burthen. Wordsworth, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey,' 38-41.

Such as angels weep. *Paradise Lost*, I. 620.

68. *In either hand.* *Paradise Lost*, XII. 637-47.

IV. ON DRYDEN AND POPE

The references throughout are to the *Globe* Editions of Pope and Dryden.

69-71. *The question, whether Pope was a poet.* In a slightly different form these paragraphs appeared in *The Edinburgh Magazine*, Feb. 1818.

70. *The pale reflex of Cynthia's brow.* *Romeo and Juliet*, III. 5.

71. *Martha Blount* (1690-1762). She was Pope's life-long friend, to whom he dedicated several poems, and to whom he bequeathed most of his property.

In Fortune's ray. *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 3.

The gnarled oak . . . the soft myrtle. *Measure for Measure*, II. 2.

Calm contemplation and poetic ease. Thomson's *Autumn*, 1275.

72. *More subtle web Arachne cannot spin.* *Faerie Queene*, II. XII. 77.

Not with more glories. *The Rape of the Lock*, II. 1-22.

73. *From her fair head.* *Ibid.* III. 154.

Now meet thy fate. *Ibid.* V. 87-96.

The Lutrin of Boileau. Boileau's account of an ecclesiastical dispute over a reading-desk was published in 1674-81. It was translated into English by Nicholas Rowe in 1708. *The Rape of the Lock* was published in 1712-14.

'Tis with our judgments. *Essay on Criticism*, 9-10.

74. *Still green with bays.* *Ibid.* 181-92.

His little bark with theirs should sail. *Essay on Man*, IV. 383-6. ['My little bark attendant sail.']

But of the two, etc. *Essay on Criticism*, See the *Round Table*, vol. I. p. 41, for the first mention of these couplets by Hazlitt.

75. *There died the best of passions.* *Eloisa to Abelard*, 40.

76. *If ever chance.* *Ibid.* 347-8.

He spins [' draweth out '] *the thread of his verbosity.* *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. 1.

The very words. *Macbeth*, I. 3.

Now night descending. *The Dunciad*, I. 89-90.

Virtue may chuse. *Epilogue to the Satires*, Dialogue I., 137-172.

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77. *His character of Chartres.* *Moral Essays*, Epistle III.
Where Murray. *Imitations of Horace*, Epistle VI., To Mr. Murray, 52-3. William Murray (1704-1793) was created Baron Mansfield in 1756.
Why rail they then. *Epilogue to the Satires*, Dialogue II. 138-9.
Despise low thoughts [joys]. *Imitations of Horace*, Epistle VI., To Mr. Murray, 60-2.

78. *Character of Addison.* *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 193-214.
Alas! how changed. *Moral Essays*, Epistle III. 305-8.
Why did I write? *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 125-146.
Oh, lasting as those colours. *Epistle to Mr. Jervas*, 63-78.

79. *Who have eyes, but they see not.* *Psalm*, CXV. 5, etc.
I lisp'd in numbers. *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 128.
Et quum conabar scribere, versus erat. Ovid, *Trist.*, IV. X. 25-26.

> 'Sponte sua numeros carmen veniebat ad aptos;
> Et, quod tentabam dicere, versus erat.'

80. *Besides these jolly birds.* *The Hind and the Panther*, III. 991-1025. ['Whose crops impure.']

81. *The jolly God.* *Alexander's Feast, or the power of music: A song in honour of St. Cecilia's Day* 1697, 49-52. A few phrases from this criticism were used in the Essay on Mr. Wordsworth, *The Spirit of the Age* (vol. IV. p. 276). For *for, as piece*, read *for, as a piece.*

82. *The best character of Shakespeare.* Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, ed. Ker, I. 79-80.
Tancred and Sigismunda. *i.e.* Sigismonda and Guiscardo.
Thou gladder of the mount. *Palamon and Arcite*, III. 145.

83. *Donne.* John Donne (1573-1631), whose life was written by Izaak Walton, and whom Ben Jonson described as 'the first poet in the world in some things,' but who would not live 'for not being understood.'
Waller. Edmund Waller's (1605-1687) Saccharissa was Lady Dorothy Sidney, daughter of the Earl of Leicester.
Marvel. Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), 'poet, patriot, and friend of Milton.'
Harsh, as the words of Mercury. ['The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.'] *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. 2.
Rochester. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680).
Denham. Sir John Denham (1615-1669). His *Cooper's Hill* was published in 1642.
Wither's. George Wither (1588-1667). See Lamb's Essay on the Poetical Works of George Wither. *Poems, Plays, and Essays*, ed. Ainger. The lines quoted by Hazlitt are from 'The Shepheards' Hunting,' (1615). ['To be pleasing ornaments.' 'Let me never taste of gladnesse.']

V. ON THOMSON AND COWPER

85. *Dr. Johnson makes it his praise.* 'It is said by Lord Lyttelton, in the Prologue to his posthumous play, that his works contained "no line which, dying, he could wish to blot."' *Life of Thomson.*
Bub Doddington. George Bubb Dodington (1691-1762), one of Browning's 'persons of importance in their day.' His Diary was published in 1784.
Would he had blotted a thousand! Said by Ben Jonson of Shakespeare, in his *Timber.*

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86. *Cannot be constrained by mastery.*

'Love will not submit to be controlled
By mastery.'

Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, VI.

Come, gentle Spring! 'Spring,' 1-4.
And see where surly Winter. *Ibid.* 11-25.

88. *A man of genius.* Coleridge. See Hazlitt's Essay, 'My First Acquaintance with the Poets.'
A burnished fly. *The Castle of Indolence*, I. 64. ['In prime of June.']
For whom the merry bells. *Ibid.* I. 62.
All was one full-swelling bed. *Ibid.* I. 33.
The stock-dove's plaint. *Ibid.* I. 4.
The effects of the contagion. 'Summer,' 1040-51.
Of the frequent corse. *Ibid.* 1048-9.
Breath'd hot. *Ibid.* 961-979.

89. *The inhuman rout.* 'Autumn,' 439-44.
There through the prison. 'Winter,' 799-809.
Where pure Niemi's fairy mountains rise. *Ibid.* 875-6.
The traveller lost in the snow. *Ibid.* 925-35.

90. *Through the husk'd air.* *Ibid.* 229-64.
Enfield's Speaker. *The Speaker*, or Miscellaneous Pieces selected from the best English Writers, 1775, and often reprinted. By William Enfield, LL.D., (1741-1797).
Palemon and Lavinia. 'Autumn,' 177-309.
Damon and Musidora. 'Summer,' 1267-1370.
Celadon and Amelia. *Ibid.* 1171-1222.

91. *Overrun with the spleen.* Cf. 'The lad lay swallow'd up in spleen.'—Swift's *Cassinus and Peter*, a Tragical Elegy, 1731.
Unbought grace. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*: Select Works, ed. Payne, II. 89.

92. *His Vashti.* *The Task*, III. 715.
Crazy Kate, etc. *The Task*, I. 534, *et seq.*
Loud hissing urn. *Ibid.* IV. 38.
The night was winter. *Ibid.* VI. 57-117.

94. *The first volume of Cowper's poems.* This was published in 1782, and contained *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, *Retirement*, etc.
The proud and humble believer. *Truth*, 58-70.
Yon cottager. *Truth*, 317-36.
But if, unblamable in word and thought. *Hope*, 622-34.

95. *Robert Bloomfield* (1766-1823). *The Farmer's Boy* was written in a London garret. It was published in 1800, and rapidly became popular.

96. *Thomson, in describing the same image.* *The Seasons*, 'Spring,' 833-45.
While yet the year. ['As yet the trembling year is unconfirm'd.'] *The Seasons*, 'Spring,' 18.

97. *Burn's Justice.* *Justice of the Peace*, by Richard Burn (1709-1785), the first of many editions of which was issued in two vols., 1755.
Wears cruel garters. *Twelfth Night*, II. 5. ['Cross-gartered.']
A panopticon. Jeremy Bentham's name for his method of prison supervision. See *The Spirit of the Age*, vol. III., note to p. 197.
The latter end of his Commonwealth [does not] *forget*[s] *the beginning.* *The Tempest*, II. 1.

98. *Mother Hubberd's Tale.* *Prosopopœia, or Mother Hubberd's Tale.*

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98. *The Oak and the Briar.* 'Februarie,' in *The Shepheard's Calender.*
Browne. William Browne (1591-?1643), pastoral poet. His chief work was *Britannia's Pastorals* (1613-6).
Withers. See note to p. 83, *ante.* The family name is occasionally spelt Withers though the poet is generally known as Wither.
The shepherd boy piping. Book I. chap. ii.
Like Nicholas Poussin's picture. See Hazlitt's Essay 'On a Landscape by Nicolas Poussin' in *Table Talk*, vol. VI. p. 168, *et seq.*
Sannazarius's Piscatory Eclogues. Iacopo Sannazaro's (1458-1530) *Piscatory Eclogues*, translated by Rooke, appeared in England in 1726. See *The Round Table*, vol. I. p. 56, 'On John Buncle,' for a similar passage on Walton.

99. *A fair and happy milk-maid.* The quotation of the 'Character' from Sir Thomas Overbury's *Wife* was contributed to the notes to Walton's *Complete Angler* by Sir Henry Ellis, editor of Bagster's edition, 1815. He took it from the twelfth edition, 1627, of Sir Thomas Overbury's book. The following passages may be added between 'curfew' and 'her breath' to make the note as quoted perfect :—'In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk press makes the milk the whiter or sweeter ; for never came almond glue or aromatic ointment of her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them.'

100. *Two quarto volumes.* John Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* was published in two volumes, 4to, in 1786-1805. See *The Spirit of the Age*, vol. IV. p. 231, on 'The Late Mr. Horne Tooke.'
The heart of his mystery. Hamlet, III. 2.
Rousseau in his Confessions . . . a little spot of green. Part I. Book III. See *The Round Table*, 'On the Love of the Country,' and notes thereto, vol. I. p. 17, *et. seq.* The greater part of that letter was used for the purposes of this lecture.

102. *Expatiates freely.* Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epis. I. 5.
Mrs. Radcliffe's romances. Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), author of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and other popular stories of sombre mystery and gloom.

103. *My heart leaps up.* Wordsworth.

['So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die !
The Child is father of the Man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.']

Ah ! voila de la pervenche. Confessions, Part I. Book VI.
That wandering voice. Wordsworth. *To the Cuckoo.*

VI. ON SWIFT, YOUNG, GRAY, COLLINS, ETC.

104. *Parnell.* Thomas Parnell (1679-1717). His poems were published by Pope, and his life was written by Goldsmith.
Arbuthnot. John Arbuthnot (1667-1735), physician and writer. He had the chief share in the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, which was published amongst Pope's works in 1741. His *History of John Bull* was published in 1712.

105. *Trim. . . . the old jack-boots. Tristram Shandy*, III. 20.

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106. *Prior.* Matthew Prior (1664-1721), diplomatist and writer of 'occasional' verse. See Thackeray's *English Humourists.*

Sedley. Sir Charles Sedley (1639-1701), Restoration courtier and poet.

Little Will. An English Ballad on the taking of Namur by the King of Great Britain, 1695.

107. *Gay.* John Gay (1685-1732), the author of *Fables*, *The Beggar's Opera*, so often quoted by Hazlitt, and *Black-eyed Susan.* *Polly* was intended as a sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, but it was prohibited from being played, though permitted to be printed. See *The Round Table*, *The Beggar's Opera*, and notes thereto. That Essay was used as part of the present lecture.

Happy alchemy of mind. See *The Round Table*, vol. i., p. 65. Cf. also Lamb's essay, 'The Londoner,' *Morning Post*, Feb. 1, 1802: 'Thus an art of extracting morality from the commonest incidents of a town life, is attained by the same well-natured alchemy, with which the Foresters of Arden,' etc.

O'erstepping [not] *the modesty of nature. Hamlet*, III. 2.

108. *Miss Hannah More's laboured invectives. Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, 1788, and *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, 1790. Each passed through several editions before the close of the century. Of the first named, the third edition is stated to have been sold out in four hours.

Sir Richard Blackmore. Court physician to William and Anne. He died in 1729, after having written six epics in sixty books.

109. *Mr. Jekyll's parody.* Joseph Jekyll (1754-1837), Master of Chancery. The parody was published in the *Morning Chronicle*, Friday, Aug. 19, 1809.

A City Shower. See *The Tatler*, No. 238.

110. *Mary the cookmaid . . . Mrs. Harris.* 'Mary the Cook-maid's letter to Dr. Sheridan,' 1723, which begins thus:—

> 'Well, if ever I saw such another man since my mother bound my head! You a gentleman! marry come up! I wonder where you were bred.'

'Mrs. Harris's Petition,' 1699, after the preliminaries—

> 'Humbly sheweth,
> That I went to warm myself in Lady Betty's chamber, because I was cold; And I had in a purse seven pounds, four shillings, and sixpence, besides farthings, in money and gold.'

Rector of Laracor. Swift was appointed to the vicarage of Laracor, Trim, West Meath, Ireland, in 1700.

Gulliver's nurse. In the Voyage to Brobdingnag.

An eminent critic. Jeffrey's article on Scott's *Swift*, *Edinburgh Review*, No. 53, Sept. 1816, vol. xxvii. pp. 1 *et seq.*

112. *Shews vice her own image.* [To shew virtue her own feature, scorn her own image.] *Hamlet*, III. 2.

Indignatio facit versus. [Facit indignatio versum.] Juvenal, *Sat.* I. 79.

As dry as the remainder biscuit. As You Like It, II. 7.

Reigned there and revelled. Paradise Lost, IV. 765.

As riches fineless. Othello, III. 3.

113. *Camacho's wedding.* Part II. chap. xx.

How Friar John . . . lays about him. Gargantua, Book I., chap. xxvii.

How Panurge whines in the storm. Pantagruel, Book IV. chap. xix., *et seq.*

How Gargantua mewls. Gargantua, Book I., chap. vii.

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113. *The pieces of silver money in the Arabian Nights.* The Story of the Barber's Fourth Brother.
Mortal consequences. Macbeth, v. 3.

114. *The dull product of a scoffer's pen.* Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book II.
Nothing can touch him further. Macbeth, III. 2.
Voltaire's Traveller. See *Histoire des Voyages de Scarmentado.*
Be wise to-day. Night Thoughts, I. 390-433.

115. *Zanga is a vulgar caricature of it.* Cf. *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, 'Othello,' vol. I. p. 209. Edward Young's (1683-1765) *Revenge* was first acted in 1721.

116. *We poets in our youth.* Wordsworth, *Resolution and Independence*, 8.
Read the account of Collins. See Johnson's life of him in his *English Poets*, where the eighth verse of the 'Ode to Evening' is as follows :—

> 'Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene,
> Or find some ruin 'midst its dreary dells,
> Whose Walls more awful nod,
> By thy religious gleams.'

And the last :—

> 'So long regardful of thy quiet rule,
> Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace,
> Thy gentlest influence own,
> And love thy favourite name!'

118. *Hammond.* James Hammond (1710-1741). See Johnson's *Lives of the Poets.* He seems to have died of love. His *Love Elegies*, in imitation of Tibullus, were published posthumously.
Mr. Coleridge (in his Literary Life). See ed. Bohn, p. 19. '[I] felt almost as if I had been newly couched, when by Mr. Wordsworth's conversation, I had been induced to re-examine with impartial strictness Gray's celebrated Elegy.'
The still sad music of humanity. Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey.*
Be mine . . . to read eternal new romances. Letter to Richard West, Thursday, April 1742.
Don't you remember Lords —— and ——. Letter to Richard West, May 27, 1742.
Shenstone. William Shenstone (1714-1763), the 'water-gruel bard' of Horace Walpole.

119. *Akenside.* Mark Akenside (1721-1770), physician and poet. The *Pleasures of the Imagination* was begun in his eighteenth year, and was first published in 1744.
Armstrong. John Armstrong (1709-1779), also physician and poet, whose *Art of Preserving Health*, a poem in four books, was also published in 1744.
Churchill. Charles Churchill (1731-1764), satirist. His *Rosciad*, in which the chief actors of the time were taken off, was published in 1761. *The Prophecy of Famine*, a Scots Pastoral, inscribed to John Wilkes, Esq., in which the Scotch are ridiculed, appeared in 1763.
Green. Matthew Green (1696-1737). *The Spleen* (1737).
Dyer. John Dyer (? 1700-1758), *Grongar Hill* (1727). See Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* and Wordsworth's Sonnet to him.
His lot [feasts] *though small. The Traveller.*
And turn'd and look'd. The Deserted Village, 370. 'Return'd and wept and still return'd to weep.'

120. *Mr. Liston.* John Liston (1776-1846).

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120. *His character of a country schoolmaster.* In *The Deserted Village.*
Warton. Thomas Warton (1728-1790), author of *The History of English Poetry* (1774-81). He succeeded William Whitehead as poet laureate.
Tedious and brief. All's Well that Ends Well, II. 3, etc.

122. *Chatterton.* Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770). The verse of Wordsworth's quoted is in *Resolution and Independence.*
Dr. Milles, etc. Dr. Jeremiah Milles (1713-1784), whom Coleridge described as 'an owl mangling a poor dead nightingale.' See Sir Herbert Croft's (1751-1816) *Love and Madness*, Letter 51 (1780). Vicesimus Knox, D.D. (1752-1821), author of many volumes of Essays, Sermons, etc.

VII. ON BURNS, AND THE OLD ENGLISH BALLADS

123. *Unslacked of motion.* See vol. IV., note to p. 42.
Anderson. Robert Anderson, M.D. (1751-1830), editor and biographer of *British Poets.*
Mr. Malone. Edmond Malone (1741-1812), the Shakespearian editor. He did not believe in the 'antiquity' of Chatterton's productions. See his 'Cursory Observations on the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley,' 1782.
Dr. Gregory. George Gregory, D.D. (1754-1808), author of *The Life of Thomas Chatterton, with Criticisms on his Genius and Writings, and a concise view of the Controversy concerning Rowley's Poems.* 1789.

124. *Annibal Caracci.* Annibale Caracci (1560-1609), painter of the Farnese Gallery at Rome.
Essays, p. 144. The reference should be to Dr. Knox's Essay, No. CXLIV., not p. 144 (vol. iii. p. 206, 1787).

127. *He was like a man made after supper.* 2 *King Henry IV.*, III. 2.
Some one said. Cf. Hazlitt's Essay, 'Of Persons one would wish to have seen,' where Burns's hand, held out to be grasped, is described as 'in a burning fever.'
Made him poetical. As You Like It, III. 2.
Create a soul under the ribs of death. Comus, 562.

128. *A brassen candlestick tuned.* 1 *King Henry IV.*, III. 1.
In a letter to Mr. Gray. January 1816.
Via goodman Dull. Love's Labour's Lost, V. 1.

129. *Out upon this half-faced fellowship.* 1 *King Henry IV.*, I. 3.
As my Uncle Toby. Tristram Shandy, Book VI., chap. XXXII.
Drunk full ofter. Chaucer's *The Clerkes Tale.* 'Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne she drank.'
The act and practique part. King Henry V., I. 1.
The fly that sips treacle. The Beggar's Opera, II. 2.

131. *In a poetical epistle.* To a friend who had declared his intention of writing no more poetry.
Self-love and social. Pope's *Essay on Man*, IV. 396.
Himself alone. 3 *King Henry VI.*, V. 6.
If the species were continued like trees. Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, Part II.
This, this was the unkindest cut. Julius Caesar, III. 2.

132. *Launce's account of his dog Crabbe. Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. 4.

135. *Tam o' Shanter.* [For 'light cotillon,' read 'cotillon, brent.']

137. *The bosom of its Father.* Gray's *Elegy.*
The Cotter's Saturday Night. [For 'carking cares,' read 'kiaugh and care.']

139. *The true pathos and sublime of human life.* Burns, 'Epistle to Dr. Blacklock.'

140. *O gin my love.* ['O my luv's like a red, red rose.']

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140. *Thoughts that often lie.* Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality.*
Singing the ancient ballad of Roncesvalles. Part II., Chap. IX.

141. *Archbishop Herring.* Thomas Herring (1693-1757), Archbishop of Canterbury. *Letters to William Duncombe, Esq.*, 1728-1757 (1777), Letter XII., Sept. 11, 1739.
Auld Robin Gray . . . Lady Ann Bothwell's lament. Lady Anne Barnard (1750-1825) did not acknowledge her authorship of 'Auld Robin Gray' (to Sir Walter Scott) until 1823.

142. *O waly, waly.* This ballad was first published in Allan Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*, 1724.

[I. 8. 'Sae my true love did lichtlie me.'

II. 5-8. 'O wherefore should I busk my heid,
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true love has me forsook,
And says he 'll never lo'e me mair.'

III. 2, 8. 'The sheets sall ne'er be press'd by me
For of my life I am wearie.'

V. 7-8. 'And I mysel' were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!']

William Allingham's *Ballad Book*, p. 41.

The Braes of Yarrow. By William Hamilton, of Bangour (1704-1754).

143. *Turner's History of England.* Sharon Turner (1768-1847), *History of England from the Norman Conquest to the Death of Elizabeth* (1814-1823). The story is a pretty one, but the Eastern lady was not the mother of the Cardinal.
J. H. Reynolds. John Hamilton Reynolds (1796-1852).

VIII. ON THE LIVING POETS

143. *No more talk where God or angel guest. Paradise Lost*, IX. 1-3.

146. *The Darwins, the Hayleys, the Sewards.* Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), grandfather of Charles Darwin, and author of *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), a poem parodied by Frere in *The Anti-Jacobin* as 'The Loves of the Triangles.' William Hayley (1745-1820), who wrote *The Triumphs of Temper* and a *Life of Cowper*. Anna Seward (1747-1809), the 'Swan of Lichfield.' She wrote poetical novels, sonnets and a life of Dr. Darwin.
Face-making. Hamlet, III. 2.
Mrs. Inchbald. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821), novelist, dramatist and actress.
Thank the Gods. Cf. *As You Like it*, III. 3.
Mrs. Leicester's School. Ten narratives, seven by Mary, three by Charles, Lamb (1807).
The next three volumes of the Tales of My Landlord. The Heart of Midlothian (second series of the *Tales*) was published in 1818, and the third series, consisting of *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *A Legend of Montrose*, in 1819.

147. *Mrs. Barbauld.* Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825), daughter of the Rev. John Aitken, D.D., joint-author, with her brother John Aitken, of *Evenings at Home.*
Mrs. Hannah More (1745-1833). Her verses and sacred dramas were published in the first half of her life: she gradually retired from London society, and this may have led to Hazlitt's doubtful remark as to her being still in life.

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147. *Miss Baillie.* Joanna Baillie (1762-1851). *Count Basil* is one of her *Plays of the Passions* (1798-1802), and is concerned with the 'passion' of love. *De Montfort* was acted at Drury Lane in 1800 by Mrs. Siddons and Kemble.

Remorse, Bertram, and lastly Fazio. Coleridge's *Remorse* (1813), for twenty nights at Drury Lane. C. R. Maturin's *Bertram* (1816), successful at Drury lane. Dean Milman's *Fazio* (1815), acted at Bath and then at Covent Garden.

A man of no mark. 1 *King Henry IV.*, III. 2.

Make mouths [in them]. *Hamlet*, IV. 3.

Mr. Rogers's Pleasures of Memory. Published in 1792.

The Election. Genest says it was performed for the third time on June 10, 1817.

148. *The Della Cruscan.* The sentimental and affected style, initiated in 1785 by some English residents at Florence, and extinguished by Gifford's satire in the *Baviad* (1794), and *Maeviad* (1796).

To show that power of love

> 'He knows who gave that love sublime,
> And gave that strength of feeling great
> Above all human estimate.'
>
> Wordsworth's *Fidelity.*

149. *Campbell's Pleasures of Hope.* Published in 1799, *Gertrude of Wyoming* in 1809.

Some hamlet shade. Pleasures of Hope, I. 309-10.

Curiosa infelicitas. 'Curiosa felicitas Horatii.' *Petronius Arbiter*, § 118.

Of outward show elaborate. Paradise Lost, VIII. 538.

Tutus nimium, timidusque procellarum. Horace, *De Arte Poet.*, 128.

150. *Like morning brought by night. Gertrude of Wyoming*, I. xiii.

Like Angels' visits. Pleasures of Hope, Part II., l. 378. Cf. *The Spirit of the Age*, vol. III. p. 346.

Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus. Horace, *De Arte Poetica*, 191.

151. *So work the honey-bees. Henry V.*, I. 2.

Around him the bees. From the Sixth Song in *The Beggar's Opera.*

Perilous stuff. Macbeth, V. 3.

152. *Nest of spicery. King Richard III.*, IV. 4.

Therefore to be possessed with double pomp. King John, IV. 2.

153. *Nook monastic. As You Like It*, III. 2.

He hath a demon. Cf. 'He hath a devil,' *St. John* X. 20.

House on the wild sea. Coleridge's *The Piccolomini*, I. iv. 117.

154. *Looks on tempests.* Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, CXVI.

Great princes' favourites. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, XXV.

155. *Their mortal consequences. Macbeth*, V. 3.

The warriors in the Lady of the Lake. Canto V. 9.

The Goblin Page. Canto II. 31.

Mr. Westall's pictures. Richard Westall (1765-1836). He designed numerous drawings to illustrate Milton, Shakespeare, Scott, etc.

156. *Robinson Crusoe's boat. The Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, p. 138, ed. G. A. Aitken.

I did what little I could. Hazlitt reviewed *The Excursion* in *The Examiner* (see *The Round Table*, vol. I. pp. 111-125).

162. *Coryate's Crudities. Hastily gobled up in Five Moneths' Travells in France, etc.* (1611), by Thomas Coryate (?1577-1617).

The present poet-laureate. Southey.

Neither butress nor coign of vantage. Macbeth, I. 6.

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186. *The satirist Aretine.* Pietro Aretino (1492-1557), the 'Scourge of Princes.'
Machiavel. The Arte of Warre and *The Florentine Historie* appeared in English in 1560 and 1594 respectively.
Castiglione. Count Baldasare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, a Manual for Courtiers, was translated in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby.
Ronsard. Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85), 'Prince of Poets.'
Du Bartas. Guillaume de Saluste Seigneur du Bartas (1544-1590), soldier, statesman and precursor of Milton as a writer on the theme of creation. His 'Diuine Weekes and Workes' were Englished in 1592 and later by 'yt famous Philomusus,' Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618). See Dr. Grosart's edition of his works.

187. *Fortunate fields and groves, etc. Paradise Lost*, III. 568-70.
Prospero's Enchanted Island. Modern editors give Eden's *History of Travayle*, 1577, as the probable source of Setebos, etc.
Right well I wote. The Faerie Queene, Stanzas I.-III.

188. *Lear . . . old ballad.* Or rather from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum*, c. 1130. The ballad of *King Leir* (Percy's *Reliques*) is probably of later date than Shakespeare.
Othello . . . Italian novel. The Heccatommithi of Giraldi Cinthio. The work may have been known in England through a French translation.
Those bodiless creations. Hamlet, III. 4.
Your face, my Thane. Macbeth, I. 5.
Tyrrel and Forrest. In *King Richard III.*

189. *Thick and slab. Macbeth*, IV. 1.
Snatched a [wild and] *fearful joy.* Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.*
The great pestilence of Florence. In 1348. The plague forms but the artificial framework of the tales; to escape it certain Florentines retire to a country house and, in its garden, they tell the tales that form the book.
The course of true love never did run even [smooth.] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. 1.
The age of chivalry. 'The age of chivalry is gone . . . and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.' Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution.* Select Works, ed. Payne, II. 89.
The gentle Surrey. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517-1547) whose Songs and Sonnets are in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557).
Sir John Suckling, 1609-42. Besides writing *A ballad upon a wedding* Sir John was the best player at bowls in the country and he 'invented' cribbage.
Who prized black eyes. The Session of the Poets, Ver. 20.
Like strength reposing. 'Tis might half slumbering on it own right arm.'
Keats' *Sleep and Poetry*, 237.

190. *They heard the tumult.* Cowper's *The Task*, IV. 99-100.
'I behold
The tumult and am still.'
Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen. The Two Noble Kinsmen, 1634. Although Fletcher was certainly one of the two authors of the play, it is not known who was the other. Scenes have been attributed, with some probability, to Shakespeare.
The Returne from Parnassus. 1606. See *post*, p. 280.
It snowed of meat and drink. Canterbury Tales, Prologue, 345.
As Mr. Lamb observes. Cf. *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, Lamb's note attached to Marston's *What you will.*

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191. *In act and complement* [compliment] *extern.* *Othello*, I. 1.
Description of a madhouse. In *The Honest Whore*, Part I. Act v. 2.
A Mad World, my Masters. The title of one of Middleton's comedies, 1608.
Like birdlime, brains and all. *Othello*, II. 1.

'My invention
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frize;
It plucks out brains and all.'

192. *But Pan is a God.* Lyly's *Midas*, Act IV. 1.
Materiam superabat opus. Ovid, *Met.*, II. 5.

II. ON LYLY, MARLOW, Etc.

It is not possible to give references to thoroughly satisfactory texts of the Elizabethan dramatists for the simple reason that, unfortunately, few exist. For reading purposes the volumes of select plays in 'The Mermaid Series' and a few single plays in 'The Temple Dramatists' may be mentioned.

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192. *The rich strond.* *The Faerie Queene*, III. iv. 20, 34.
193. *Rich as the oozy bottom.* *King Henry V.*, I. 2. ['sunken wreck.']
Majestic though in ruin. *Paradise Lost*, II. 300.
The Cave of Mammon. *The Faerie Queene*, II. vii. 29.
New-born gaudes, etc. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3.
Ferrex and Porrex. By Thomas Norton (1532-1584), and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (1536-1608). Acted Jan. 18, 1561-2.
194. *No figures nor no fantasies.* *Julius Caesar*, II. 1.
195. *Sir Philip Sidney says.* In his *Apologie for Poetrie.*
196. *Mr. Pope . . says.* See Spence, Letter to the Earl of Middlesex, prefixed to Dodsley's edition of *Gorboduc.*
His Muse. Thomas Sackville wrote the Induction (1563).
John Lyly. The Euphuist (*c.* 1554-1606), a native of the Kentish Weald. *Midas* (1592), *Endymion* (1591), *Alexander and Campaspe* (1584), *Mother Bombie* (1594).
198. *Poor, unfledged.* *Cymbeline*, III. 3.
Very [most] *tolerable.* *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. 3.
Grating their lean and flashy jests. *Lycidas*, 123-4.

'their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.'

Bobadil. Captain Bobadil, in *Every Man in his Humour.*
199. *The very reeds bow down.* Act IV. 2.
Out of my weakness. *Hamlet*, II. 2.
It is silly sooth. *Twelfth Night*, II. 4.
201. *Did first reduce.* Elegy to Henry Reynolds, Esquire, 91 *et seq.*
Euphues and his England. *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, appeared in 1579 and *Euphues and his England* the year following. They may be read in Arber's reprint.
Pan and Apollo. *Midas*, IV. 1.
202. *Note.* Marlowe died in 1593. He was stabbed in a tavern quarrel at Deptford.
Life and Death of Doctor Faustus. Printed 1604, 1616. See the editions of

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230. *The way of women's will.*

> 'It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
> Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
> That woman's love can win, or long inherit,
> But what it is hard is to say,
> Harder to hit. . . .'
>
> *Samson Agonistes*, 1010 *et seq.*

Hide nothing. Paradise Lost, I. 27.

231. *Fulke Greville.* Lord Brooke (1554-1628). *Alaham* and *Mustapha* were published in the folio edition of Brooke, 1633. He was the school friend, and wrote the Life, of Sir Philip Sidney. His self-composed epitaph reads, 'Fulke Grevill, servant to Queene Elizabeth, conceller to King James, frend to Sir Philip Sidney.' See Hazlitt's Essay 'Of Persons one would wish to have seen.'

The ghost of one of the old kings. Alaham.

Monsieur D'Olive. 1606.

Sparkish. In Wycherley's *Country Wife* (1675).

Witwoud and Petulant. In Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700).

234. *May-Day.* 1611.

All Fools. 1605.

The Widow's Tears. 1612.

Eastward Hoe. 1605. Ben Jonson accompanied his two friends to prison for this voluntarily. Their imprisonment was of short duration.

On his release from prison. See Drummond's *Conversations*, XIII.

Express ye unblam'd. Paradise Lost, III. 3.

Appius and Virginia. Printed 1654.

The affecting speech. I.e. that of Virginius to Virginia, Act IV. 1.

Wonder of a Kingdom. Published 1636.

Jacomo Gentili. In the above play.

Old Fortunatus. 1600.

235. *Vittoria Corombona. The White Devil*, 1612.

Signior Orlando Friscobaldo. In *The Honest Whore*, Part II., 1630.

The red-leaved tables. Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Act II. 3.

The pangs. Wordsworth's *Excursion*, VI. 554.

The Honest Whore. In two Parts, 1604 and 1630.

Signior Friscobaldo. The Second Part, Act I. 2.

237. *You'll forgive me.* The Second Part, Act II. 1.

It is my father. The Second Part, Act IV. 1.

Oh! who can paint.

238. *Tough senior. Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I. 2.

And she has felt them knowingly. Cymbeline, III. 3.

I cannot. The Honest Whore, Second Part, Act IV. 1.

239. *The manner too.* The Second Part, Act III. 1.

I'm well. The First Part, Act I. 3 ['midst of feasting'].

Turns them. II. *Henry IV.*, I. 2.

Patient Grizzel. Griselda in Chaucer's *Clerke's Tale.* Dekker collaborated in a play entitled *The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissill* (1603).

The high-flying. The Honest Whore, Second Part, Act II. 1, etc.

240. *White Devil.* 1612.

Duchess of Malfy. 1623.

By which they lose some colour. Cf. *Othello*, I. 1. 'As it may lose some colour.'

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241. *All fire and air.* *Henry V.*, III. 7, 'he is pure air and fire,' and *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. 2, 'I am fire and air.'
Like the female dove. *Hamlet*, v. 1, 'As patient as the female dove, when that her golden couplets are disclosed.'
The trial scene and the two following quotations, *The White Devil.* Act III. 1.
243. *Your hand I'll kiss.* Act II. 1.
The lamentation of Cornelia. Act v. 2.
The parting scene of Brachiano. Act v. 3.
245. *The scenes of the madhouse.* Act IV. 2.
The interview. Act IV. 1.
I prythee, and the three following quotations and note on p. 246. *The Duchess of Malfy*, Act IV. 2.
246. *The Revenger's Tragedy.* 1607.
The dazzling fence. Cf. the 'dazzling fence' of rhetoric, *Comus*, 790-91.
The appeals of Castina. Act II. 1., and Act IV. 4.
247. *Mrs. Siddons has left the stage.* Mrs. Siddons left the stage in June 1819. See *The Round Table*, vol. I., Note to p. 156.
On Salisbury-plain. At Winterslow Hut. See *Memoirs of W. Hazlitt.* 1867, vol. I. p. 259.
Stern good-night. *Macbeth*, Act II. 2. 'The fatal bellman which gives the stern'st good night.'
Take mine ease. 1 *Henry IV.* III. 3.
Cibber's manager's coat. Colley Cibber (1671-1757), actor, dramatist, and manager. See the *Apology for his Life* (1740).
Books, dreams. *Personal Talk.* ['Dreams, books, are each a world . . . Two shall be named pre-eminently dear . . . by heavenly lays . . .']

IV. ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, Etc.

249. *Misuse* [praise] *the bounteous Pan.* *Comus*, 176-7.
Like eagles newly baited. Cf.

> 'All plumed like estridges that with the wind
> Baited like eagles having lately bathed.'
>
> 1 *King Henry IV.*, IV. 1.

250. *Cast the diseases of the mind.* Cf.

> 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased . . . cast
> The water of my land, find her disease,
> And purge it to a sound and pristine health?'
>
> *Macbeth*, v. 3.

Wonder-wounded. *Hamlet*, v. 1.
Wanton poets. Cf. Marlowe's *Edward II.*, Act I. 1., and Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*, II. 2.
251. *The Maid's Tragedy.* Acted 1609-10, printed 1619.
252. *Do not mock me.* Act IV. 1.
King and No King. Licensed 1611, printed 1619.
When he meets with Panthea. Act III. 1.
253. *The False One.* 1619.
Youth that opens. Act III. 2.
Like ['I should imagine'] *some celestial sweetness.* Act II. 3.
'Tis here, and the next quotation. Act II. 1. ['Egyptians, dare ye think.']
254. *The Faithful Shepherdess.* Acted 1610.
A perpetual feast. *Comus*, 479-80.

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254. *He takes most ease.* *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act v. 3.
Her virgin fancies wild. *Paradise Lost*, v. 296-7.
Here he woods. *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act i. 3.

255. *For her dear sake.* Act v. 3.
Brightest. Act iv. 2.
If you yield. Act ii. 2.

256. *And all my fears.* Act i. 1.
Sad Shepherd. 1637.

257. *Tumbled him* [He tumbled] *down*, and the two following quotations. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act i. 1.
We have been soldiers. Act i. 3.

258. *Tearing our pleasures.* *To his Coy Mistress*, 43 and 44.
How do you. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act ii. 2. ['lastly, children of grief and ignorance.']

261. *Sing their bondage.* *Cymbeline*, iii. 3.
The Bloody Brother, 1624; *A Wife for a Month*, 1623; *Bonduca*, acted *c.* 1619; *Thierry and Theodoret*, 1621; *The Night Walker*, 1625; *The Little French Lawyer*, *c.* 1618; *Monsieur Thomas*, *c.* 1619; *The Chances*, *c.* 1620; *The Wild Goose Chase*, acted 1621; *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, 1624.

262. *Philaster.* Acted *c.* 1608.
Sitting in my window. Act v. 5.
Into a lower world. *Paradise Lost*, xi. 283-5.
His plays were works. Suckling's *The Session of the Poets*, ver. 5.
Note, *Euphrasia.* *Philaster*, Act v. 2.

263. *Miraturque.* Virgil, *Georgics*, ii. 82.
The New Inn. Acted 1630.
The Fall of Sejanus. Acted 1603.
Two of Sejanus' bloodhounds. Act iii. 1.
To be a spy. Act iv. 3.

264. *What are thy arts.* Act iv. 5.
If this man. Act i. 2 ['blood and tyranny.']

265. *The conversations between Livia.* Act ii. 1.
Catiline's Conspiracy. Acted 1611.
David's canvas. Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), historical painter.
The description of Echo. Act i. 1. *Cynthia's Revels* was acted in 1600 and printed the year after.
The fine comparison . . . the New Inn. Cf. Act iii. 2.
Massinger and Ford. Philip Massinger (1583-1640) and John Ford (1586-? 1656).
Musical as is Apollo's lute. *Comus*, 478.

266. *Reason panders will.* *Hamlet*, iii. 4.
The true pathos. Burns, *Epistle to Dr. Blacklock.*
The Unnatural Combat, 1639; *The Picture*, licensed 1629; *The Duke of Milan*, 1623; *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, 1633; *The Bondman*, 1624; *The Virgin Martyr*, 1622.

267. *Felt a stain like a wound.* Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, ed. Payne, ii. 89.
Note. See *A View of the English Stage*, and notes thereto.

268. *Rowe's Fair Penitent.* 1703. Nicholas Rowe (1673-1718).
Fatal Dowry. 1632.
'Tis Pity She 's a Whore. 1633.

269. *Annabella and her husband.* Act iv. 3.
The Broken Heart. 1633.

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270. *Miss Baillie.* See p. 147 and notes thereto.
Perkin Warbeck. 1634.
The Lover's Melancholy. 1628.
Love's Sacrifice. 1633.
Note. *Soft peace.* Act IV. 4.
The concluding one. Act V. 2 and 3 ['court new pleasures'.]
272. *Already alluded to.* See p. 230.
273. *Mr. Lamb in his impressive eulogy. Specimens*, vol. II. p. 199.
274. *Armida's enchanted palace.* The sorceress who seduces the Crusaders. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.*
Fairy elves. Paradise Lost, I. 781 *et seq.*

'Like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount; or faery elves.'

Deaf the praised ear. Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady.*

V. ON SINGLE PLAYS, POEMS, ETC.

The Four P's. ?1530-3.
John Heywood. (*c.* 1497-*c.* 1575). He was responsible for various collections of Epigrams, containing six hundred proverbs.
276. *False knaves. Much Ado About Nothing*, IV. 2.
277. *Count Fathom.* Chap. XXI.
Friar John. Rabelais' *Gargantua*, I. 27.
278. L. 5 from foot. *Take* [taste].
279. *Which I was born to introduce.* Swift's lines *On the Death of Dr. Swift.*
As a liar of the first magnitude. Congreve's *Love for Love*, Act II. 5.
280. *Mighty stream of Tendency. The Excursion*, IX. 87.
Full of wise saws. As You Like It, Act II. 7.
The Return from Parnassus. 1606.
Like the Edinburgh Review. Only two numbers were published, which were reprinted (8vo) 1818.
Read the names. The Return from Parnassus, Act I. 2.
282. *Kempe the actor.* William Kempe, fl. *c.* 1600.
Burbage. Richard Burbage (*c.* 1567-1618), the builder of the Globe Theatre, and a great actor therein.
Few (of the University). Act IV. 3.
283. *Felt them knowingly. Cymbeline*, III. 3.
Philomusus and Studioso. Act II. 1, Act III. 5.
Out of our proof we speak. Cymbeline, III. 3.
I was not train'd. Charles Lamb's Sonnet, written at Cambridge, August 15, 1819.
284. *Made desperate. The Excursion*, VI. 532-3, quoted from Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*, Chap. I, § V.
A mere scholar. Return from Parnassus, II. 6.
The examination of Signor Immerito. Act III. 1.
286. *Gammer Gurton's Needle.* Printed 1575. John Still (1543-1607), afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells, is supposed to be its author.
287. *Gog's crosse*, and the following quotations. Act I. 5.
289. *Such very poor spelling.* Cf. Lamb's story of Randal Norris, who once remarked after trying to read a black-letter Chaucer, 'in those old books, Charley, there is sometimes a deal of very indifferent spelling.' See

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Lamb's Letter to H. Crabb Robinson, Jan. 20, 1827; Hone's *Table Book*, Feb. 10, 1827; and the first edition of the Last Essays of Elia, 1833, *A Death-Bed*.

289. *The Yorkshire Tragedy.* 1604 (attributed to Shakespeare); *Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600, (? by Munday and Drayton); *The Widow of Watling Street*, [*The Puritan, or The Widow, etc.*], 1607 (? by Wentworth Smith). See *The Round Table*, vol. i. p. 353, *et seq.*, for Schlegel and Hazlitt on these.

Green's Tu Quoque, by George Cook. Greene's 'Tu Quoque,' 1614, by Joseph Cooke (fl. c. 1600). Greene, the comedian, after whom the play is called, died 1612.

290. *Suckling's melancholy hat.* Cf. p. 270 *ante*.

Microcosmus, by Thomas Nabbes. 1637. Thomas Nabbes flourished in the time of Charles I.

291. *What do I see?* Act IV.

292. *Antony Brewer's Lingua.* 1607. This play is now said to be by John Tomkins, Scholar of Trinity, Cambridge (1594-8).

Mr. Lamb has quoted two passages. Specimens, vol. i. pp. 99-100.

292. *Why, good father.* Act II. 4.

293. *Thou, boy.* Act II. 1.

The Merry Devil of Edmonton. 1608. The author is unknown.

Sound silver sweet. Romeo and Juliet, II. 2.

The deer-stealing scenes. The Merry Devil of Edmonton, Act v. 1., etc.

294. *Very honest knaveries. Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. 4.

The way lies right. The Merry Devil of Edmonton, Act IV. 1.

The Pinner of Wakefield. By Robert Greene (1560-1592). His works have been edited by Dr. Grosart, and by Mr. Churton Collins.

Hail-fellow well met. Cf. Swift's *My Lady's Lamentation.*

Jeronymo. 1588. *The Spanish Tragedy* (? 1583-5), licensed and performed 1592. See Prof. Schick's edition in 'The Temple Dramatists.' Thomas Kyd, baptised November 6, 1558, died before 1601.

Which have all the melancholy madness of poetry. Junius: Letter No 7. to Sir W. Draper.

VI. ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, ETC.

295. *The False One.* 1619.

Valentinian. Produced before 1619. 'Now the lusty spring is seen,' Act II. 5.

The Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman. Published 1647.

Most musical. Il Penseroso, 62.

296. *The silver foam.* Cowper's *Winter's Walk at Noon*, ll. 155-6—

> 'Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
> That the wind severs from the broken wave.'

Grim-visaged, comfortless despair. Cf. 'grim visag'd war.' *Richard III.*, I. 1; and 'grim and comfortless despair.' *Comedy of Errors*, v. 1.

Beaumont died. His years were thirty-two (1584-1616).

'Tis not a life. Philaster, Act v. 2. See p. 262.

The lily on its stalk green. Chaucer, *The Knighte's Tale*, 1036.

Lapt in Elysium. Comus, 257.

Raphael. Raphael's years were thirty-seven (1483-1520).

297. *Now that his task. Comus*, 1012.

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297. *Rymer's abuse.* See Thomas Rymer's (1641-1713) *The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* (1678). He was called by Pope 'the best' and by Macaulay 'the worst' English critic.

The sons of memory. Milton's *Sonnet on Shakespeare*, 1630.

Sir John Beaumont (1582-1628), the author of *Bosworth Field*.

Fleeted the time carelessly. As You Like It, I. 1. ['golden world.']

298. *Walton's Complete Angler.* Third Day, chap. iv.

Note. Rochester's *Epigram.* Sternhold and Hopkins were the joint-authors of the greater number of the metrical versions of the Psalms (1547-62), which used to form part of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

299-300. *Drummond of Hawthornden.* William Drummond (1585-1649). His *Conversations with Ben Jonson* were written of a visit paid him by Jonson in 1618. Mention might be made of Mr. W. C. Ward's edition of his Poems (1894), wherein many variations from Hazlitt's text of the sonnets may be noted, too numerous to detail here.

Note. *I was all ear. Comus*, 560.

301. *The fly that sips treacle.* Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, II. 2.

Sugar'd sonnetting. Cf. Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, 1598, concerning Shakespeare's 'sugred Sonnets,' and Judicio in *The Return from Parnassus* (see p. 281 *ante*), 'sugar'd sonnetting.'

302. *The gentle craft.* The sub-title of a play of T. Dekker's: *The Shoemaker's Holiday, or the Gentle Craft* (1600). The phrase has long been associated with that handicraft.

A Phœnix gazed by all. Paradise Lost, v. 272.

Give a reason for the faith that was in me. Cf. Sydney Smith's—'It is always right that a man should be able to render a reason for the faith that is within him.'

303. *Oh, how despised.* Act I. 1.

304. *The Triumph of his Mistress. The Triumph of Charis.*

Nest of spicery. Richard III., IV. 4.

Oh, I could still. Cynthia's Revels, I. 1.

306. *A celebrated line.* See Coleridge's Tragedy *Osorio*, Act iv., Sc. 1., written 1797, but not published in its original form until 1873. Coleridge's *Poetical Works*, ed. Dykes Campbell, p. 498.

> 'Drip! drip! drip! drip! in such a place as this
> It has nothing else to do but drip! drip! drip!'

Recast and entitled *Remorse*, the tragedy was performed at Drury Lane, Jan. 23, 1813, and published in pamphlet form. In the Preface Coleridge relates the story of Sheridan reading the play to a large company, and turning it into ridicule by saying—

> 'Drip! drip! drip! there's nothing here but dripping.'

Hazlitt's quotation is taken, of course, from this Preface to *Remorse*.

307. *The milk of human kindness. Macbeth*, I. 5.

309. *Daniel.* Samuel Daniel, 1562-1619.

311. *Michael Drayton* (1563-1631). His Polyolbion, or 'chorographicall' description of England in thirty books was issued in 1612-22. See the Spenser Society's editions of Drayton's works.

P. Fletcher's Purple Island. Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650). *The Purple Island*, 1633. The poem has been topographically catalogued under 'Man, Isle of'!

Brown. William Browne (1591-*c.* 1643). *Britannia's Pastorals*, 1613-16: a third book (in MSS.) was printed in 1852.

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311. *Carew.* Thomas Carew (*c.* 1594-*c.* 1639).
Herrick. Robert Herrick (1591-1674). His poems were edited by Dr. Grosart in 1876.
Crashaw. Richard Crashaw (? 1612-1649), the English Mystic. See Dr. Grosart's edition, 1872.
Marvell. Andrew Marvell (1621-1678). See Dr. Grosart's edition, 1872-74.

312. *Like the motes.* 'The gay motes that people the sunbeams.' Milton's *Il Penseroso*, 8.

313. *On another occasion.* See *ante* p. 83.

315. *Clamour grew dumb. Pastorals*, Book II. Song 1.
The squirrel. Book I. Song 5.
The hues of the rainbow. Book II. Song 3.
The Shepherd's Pipe, 1614.
The Inner Temple Mask, 1620.
Marino. Giambattista Marini (1569-1625).
His form had not yet lost. Paradise Lost, I. 591.
Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86). See Grosart's edition of the Poems and Arber's editions of the *Apologie* and *Astrophel and Stella.*

318. *Ford's Version.* See Act I. 1. *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* was published in 1690.
On compulsion. 1. *Henry IV.* II. 4.
The soldier's. Hamlet, III. 1.
Like a gate of steel. Troilus and Cressida III. 3. ['receives and renders'].

320. *With centric. Paradise Lost*, VIII. 83.

321. *So that the third day.* Book I. chap. ii. ['delightful prospects'].
Georgioni, i.e. Giorgione, or Giorgio Barbarella (1477-1511), the great Venetian painter.

322. *Like two grains of wheat. The Merchant of Venice*, I. 1. ['hid in two bushels'].
Have you felt the wool. In *The Triumph of Charis.*

323. *As Mr. Burke said of nobility.* Cf. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Payne, vol. II. p. 163. 'To be honoured and even privileged by the laws, opinions and inveterate usages of our country, growing out of the prejudice of ages, has nothing to provoke horror and indignation in any man.'
The shipwreck of Pyrochles. Book I. chap. i.

324. *Certainly, as her eyelids.* Book I. chap. i.
Adriano de Armada, in Love's Labour Lost. See the two characteristic letters of Don Adriano de Armado, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act I. 1., and IV. 1.

325. *The reason of their unreasonableness. Don Quixote*, I. 1.
Pamelas and Philocleas. Heroines of the *Arcadia.*

326. *Defence of Poetry. An Apologie for Poetry*, 1595.

VII. CHARACTER OF LORD BACON'S WORKS, ETC.

One of the wisest. Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epis. IV. 282.
As in a map. Cowper's *Task*, VI. 17.

327. *Large discourse. Hamlet*, IV. 4.

331. *Sir Thomas Brown.* Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682).

333. *The bosoms and businesses.* Dedication to Bacon's *Essays.*
Find no end. Paradise Lost, II. 561.

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333. *Oh altitudo. Religio Medici*, Part I. 'I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an O altitudo!'

334. *Differences himself by. Religio Medici*, Part I. 'But (to difference my self nearer, and draw into a lesser Circle).'

He could be content if the species were continued like trees. Religio Medici, Part II.

335. *Walks gowned.* Lamb's *Sonnet*, written at Cambridge, August 15, 1819.

As it has been said. Cf. the passage quoted later (p. 340) from Coleridge.

339. *Mr. Coleridge.* See Coleridge's *Literary Remains*, vol. II. 1836. On p. 340, l. 4 the phrase, as written by Coleridge, should be 'Sir-Thomas-Brownness.'

341. *Stuff of the conscience. Othello*, I. 2.

To give us pause. Hamlet, III. 1.

Cloys with sameness. Cf. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, XIX., 'cloy thy lips with loathed satiety.'

Note. *One of no mark.* 1 *Henry IV.*, III. 2.

Without form and void. Genesis, I. 2.

He saw nature in the elements of its chaos. Religio Medici, Part I.

342. *Where pure Niemi's faery banks* [mountains]. Thomson's *Winter*, 875-6.

Rains sacrificial roses [whisperings]. *Timon of Athens*, I. 1.

Some are called at age. Chap. i. § 3.

343. *It is the same.* Chap. iii. § 7.

I have read, and the next two quotations. Chap. i. § 2.

VIII. ON THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LITERATURE, Etc.

345. *The Apostate and Evadne. The Apostate* (1817) by Richard Lalor Sheil (1791-1851), *Evadne* (1819).

The Traitor by old Shirley. James Shirley's (1596-1666) *The Traitor* (1637).

The last of those fair clouds.

Mr. Tobin. John Tobin (1770-1804). The *Honey-Moon* was produced at Drury Lane, Jan. 31, 1805. See *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. I. p. 344.

The Curfew. Tobin's play was produced at Drury Lane, Feb. 19, 1807.

346. *Mr. Lamb's John Woodvil.* Published 1802.

There where we have treasured. Cf. *S. Matt.* vi. 21.

The tall [and elegant stag] *deer that paints a dancing shadow of his horns in the swift brook* [in the water, where he drinks].

Lamb's *John Woodvil*, II. ii. 195-7.

But fools rush in. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, III. 66.

To say that he has written better. Lamb's articles in Leigh Hunt's *Reflector* on Hogarth and Shakespeare's tragedies, appeared in 1811.

A gentleman of the name of Cornwall. Bryan Waller Procter's (Barry Cornwall 1787-1874), *Dramatic Scenes* were published in 1819.

347. *The Falcon.* Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 5th day, 9th story. See *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. I. p. 331, and *The Round Table*, vol. I. p. 163.

348. *A late number of the Edinburgh Review.* The article is by Hazlitt himself, in the number for Feb. 1816, vol. 26, pp. 68, *et seq.*

Florimel in Spenser. Book III. 7.

There was magic. Othello, III. 4.

349. *Schlegel somewhere compares.* Cf. *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (Bohn, 1846) p. 407.

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349. *So withered.* *Macbeth*, I. 3.
The description of Belphœbe. *The Faerie Queene*, II. iii. 21 *et seq.*
350. *All plumed like estriches.* Cf. 1 *King Henry IV.* IV. 1.
352. *Antres vast.* *Othello*, I. 3.
Orlando . . . Rogero. In Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso.*
353. *New-lighted.* *Hamlet*, III. 4.
The evidence of things unseen. *Hebrews*, xi. 1.
Broods over the immense [vast] *abyss.* *Paradise Lost*, I. 21.
The ignorant present time. *Macbeth*, I. 5.
355. *See o'er the stage.* Thomson's *Winter*, ll. 646-8.
The Orphan. By Otway, 1680.
Arabian trees. *Othello*, V. 2.
That sacred pity. *As You Like It*, II. 7.
Miss O'Neill. Eliza O'Neill (1791-1872).
356. *Hog hath lost his Pearl.* 1613.
Addison's Cato. 1713.
Dennis's Criticism. John Dennis's (1657-1734) *Remarks on Cato*, 1713.
Don Sebastian. 1690.
The mask of Arthur and Emmeline. *King Arthur, or the British Worthy* 1691, a Dramatic Opera with music by Purcell.
357. *Alexander the Great . . . Lee.* *The Rival Queens* (1677) by Nathaniel Lee (1655-92).
Œdipus. 1679.
Relieve the killing languor. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Select Works, ed. Payne, II. 120).
Leave then the luggage, and the two following quotations. *Don Sebastian*, Act II. 1.
359. *The Hughes.* John Hughes (1677-1720) author of *The Siege of Damascus* 1720, and one of the contributors to *The Spectator.*
The Hills. Aaron Hill (1684-1749) poet and dramatist.
The Murphys. Arthur Murphy (1727-1805) dramatist and biographer.
Fine by degrees. Matthew Prior's *Henry and Emma.*
Southern. Thomas Southerne (1660/1-1746), who wrote *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1696).
Lillo. George Lillo (1693-1739), *Fatal Curiosity*, 1737.
Moore. Edward Moore (1712-1757), *The Gamester*, 1753.
In one of his Letters. See the letter dated September, 1737.
Sent us weeping. *Richard II.* V. 1.
Rise sadder. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.*
Douglas. A tragedy by John Home (1724-1808), first played at Edinburgh in 1756.
360. *Decorum is the principal thing.* 'What Decorum is, which is the grand Master-piece to observe.' Milton on Education, Works, 1738, I. p. 140.
Aristotle's definition of tragedy. In the *Poetics.*
Lovers' Vows. Mrs. Inchbald's adaptation from Kotzebue, 1800.
Pizarro. Sheridan's adaptation from Kotzebue's *The Spaniard in Peru*, 1799.
Shews the very age. *Hamlet*, III. 2.
361. *Orson.* In the fifteenth century romance, *Valentine and Orson.*
Pure in the last recesses. Dryden's translation from the Second Satire of *Persius*, 133.
There is some soul of goodness. *Henry V.*, IV. 1.
There's something rotten. *Hamlet*, I. 4.
362. *The Sorrows of Werter.* Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther* was finished in 1774.

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362. *The Robbers.* By Schiller, 1781.
It was my wish. Act III. 2.

363. *Don Carlos.* 1787.
His Wallenstein. Schiller's, 1799; Coleridge's, 1800.
Cumberland's imitation. Richard Cumberland's (1732-1811) *Wheel of Fortune* (1779).
Goethe's tragedies. Count Egmont, 1788; *Stella*, 1776; *Iphigenia*, 1786.
Memoirs of Anastasius the Greek. Thomas Hope's (1770-1831) Eastern romance was published in 1819 and was received with enthusiasm by the *Edinburgh Review.*
When in the fine summer evenings. Werther (ed. Bohn), p. 337.

364. *As often got without merit. Othello*, II. 3.

SELECT BRITISH POETS

Dates, etc., are not given of those writers mentioned earlier in the present volume.

See W. C. Hazlitt's *Memoirs of William Hazlitt*, II. 197-8, for the few details that are known concerning the origin of this work. It was the opinion of Edward Fitzgerald that 'Hazlitt's Poets is the best selection I have ever seen.'

367. *Dr. Knox.* Vicesimus Knox, D.D. (1752-1821), a voluminous and able author, preacher, and compiler. See Boswell's *Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, iv. 390-1.

368. *Baser matter. Hamlet*, I. 5.
Taken him. Romeo and Juliet, III. 2.

369. *Perpetual feast. Comus*, 480.
Rich and rare. Cf. Pope, Prologue to *Satires*, 171.

371. *Daniel.* Samuel Daniel, 1562-1619.

372. *Cowley.* Abraham Cowley, 1618-1667.
Roscommon. Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, 1634-1685. His translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* was published in 1680.
Pomfret. John Pomfret, 1667-1703. *The Choice*, 1699.
Lord Dorset. Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset (*c.* 1536-1608), author of the *Induction to a Mirror for Magistrates*, and joint-author with Thomas Norton of the tragedy *Ferrex and Porrex* (Gorboduc). See p. 193, *et seq.*
J. Philips. John Philips, 1676-1708. *The Splendid Shilling*, 1705.
Halifax. Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, 1661-1715, joint-author with Matthew Prior of the parody on Dryden's *Hind and Panther*, entitled *The Town and Country Mouse.*

373. *The mob of gentlemen.* Pope, *Epis. Hor.* Ep. I. Book II. 108.
Parnell. Thomas Parnell, 1679-1717. He was a friend of Swift and of Pope.
Prior. Matthew Prior, 1664-1721.

374. *Blair.* Robert Blair, 1699-1746. *The Grave*, 1743.
Ambrose Philips's Pastorals. These appeared in Tonson's *Miscellany* (1709). Ambrose Philips's dates are ?1675-1749. He has his place in *The Dunciad.*

375. *Mallet.* David Mallet, 1700-1765, is best remembered for his fusion of two old ballads into his *William and Margaret*, and for his possible authorship of *Rule Britannia.*

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375. *Less is meant.* Cf. Milton's *Il Penseroso*, 120.

378. *Thoughts that glow* [breathe]. Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, 110.

Lord Thurlow. Edward, second Lord Thurlow (1781-1829), a nephew of the Lord Chancellor, published *Verses on Several Occasions* (1812), *Ariadne* (1814), and other volumes of poems.

379. *Mr. Milman.* Henry Hart Milman, 1791-1868, of *Latin Christianity* fame was also the author of several dramas and dramatic poems, and of several well-known hymns.

Bowles. William Lisle Bowles, 1762-1850.

Mr. Barry Cornwall. Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874).

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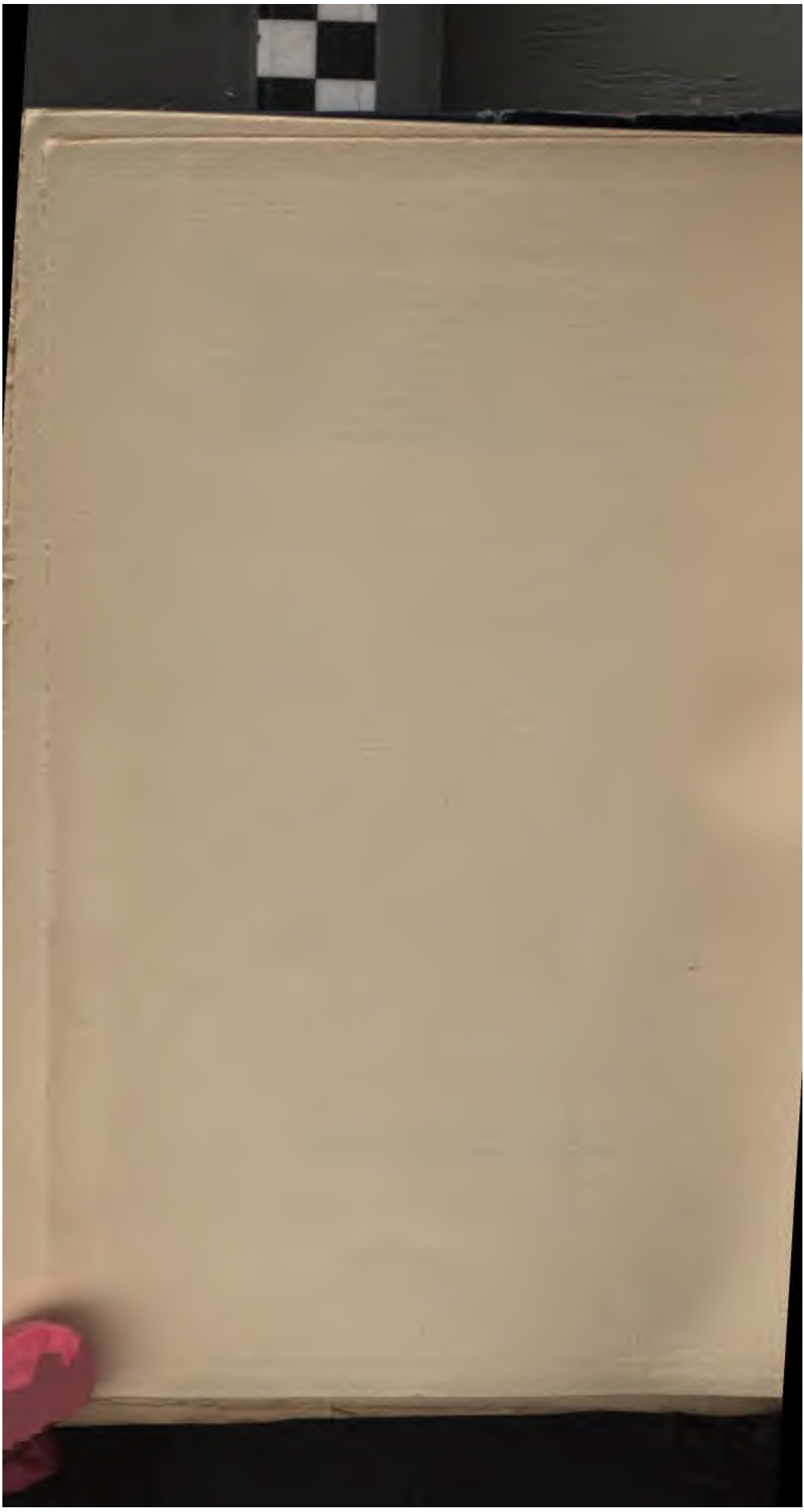

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